



THE LIBERTY "BOYS OF '76"

A Weekly Magazine containing Stories of the American Revolution.

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THE LIBERTY BOYS AND THE "SWAMP FOX"

OR,

HELPING MARION.

By **HARRY MOORE.**

CHAPTER I.

A DISASTROUS BATTLE.

"Oh, mine hait! mine hait!"

"Phwat's dhe matther, Dootchy?"

"Oh, mine hait aches bretty muchness, alretty!"

"Phwat is afther makin' your head ache, Oi dunno?"

"I haf got me von pullet in der top uf mine hait ould, und dot's vat is der madder."

"Got a pullet in dhe top av your head, yez say?"

"Yah, dot ish so."

"Oi don't bel'ave yez are afther bein' hurted, Dootchy."

"I am a dead poy; und dot ish so. I haf got me von pullet righd through der top uf mine hait."

"Oi'll say how bad hurted yes are afther bein', Dootchy."

Two youths of perhaps nineteen or twenty years of age were seated on a fallen tree, beside the Santee River, in South Carolina. One was blue-eyed and freckle-faced, with red hair and a jolly look in the twinkling eyes. This was Patsy Brannigan, an Irish youth; the other was short and fat, with tow-colored hair, and a look of innocence and gravity; this youth was Carl Gookenspieler, a Dutch youth. Both were members of a company of youths known as "The Liberty Boys of '76." They were by themselves.

It was mid afternoon of the 16th of August, of the year 1780. The War of the Revolution was in full blast, and just at this time there was considerable doing in the South. General Gates had been sent down to take charge of the patriot Army of the South, and had done so. He had advanced toward Camden, where there was a good-sized force of British, under Generals Cornwallis and Rawdon, but had taken the wrong road in going, and had had

a hard time indeed. Then, to cap the climax, his force had been taken by surprise that morning, by Cornwallis' and Rawdon's army, and after a sharp battle, had been put to flight.

The "Liberty Boys" had been sent down South to do all they could for the cause of liberty, and they had joined Gates' army, and had taken part in the battle of Camden. They had fought desperately, and were the last to leave the field and retreat.

In the battle Patsy Brannigan and Carl Gookenspieler had fought with all their might, and had done their full share, for both were brave fellows; but just as they were leaving the field their horses were shot down, and they had been forced to take to the timber afoot.

They had made all possible speed away from the battlefield, for they realized that the patriot army was hopelessly beaten, and they did not wish to be captured.

They had continued onward for an hour or more, and then had come to a stop on the bank of the Santee. Here they had seated themselves on the fallen tree, and the conversation above given ensued.

Patsy made an examination of Carl's head, and found that he had been given a painful wound in the scalp by a bullet. It was not serious, however, and Patsy told his companion so.

"It won't be afther hurthin' yez, Dootchy," he declared.

"Yah, bud id vos peen hurting me now, alretty," said Carl, feeling of the scalp gingerly.

"Shure an' Oi don't mane thot it won't be afther hurtin' yez, but thot it won't hurt yez. Now do yez undtherstan' me?"

"Yah, I don't vas understood; it von't hurt me, bud id vill hurt me, eh? Yah, dot vos peen blain as der nose on our face."

"Oi mane thot it won't be afther killin' yez; thot's phwat Oi mane; av coorse it'll giv' yez some pain."

"Yah, dot ish so; id vos gif me much painness alretty."

The two youths hardly knew what to do. When their horses were shot down they had been left behind by their comrades, all of whom were on horseback, and now, of course, the youths did not know where the main force of "Liberty Boys" was.

"Dey peen losted vrom us, alretty," said Carl. "Uf ve don'd vos fint dem, vat vill to dem happen?"

"Shure, an' it's phwat'll happen to us, is phwat is bodtherin' mesilf," said Patsy.

"Yah, dot ish so; if ve don'd vas fint der 'Lipperty Poys,' vat vill happen mit yourselluf—dot ish der quvestion."

"Well, phwativer happens to me wull happen to yersilf, Dootchy, an' thot's shure."

"Vell, I gan stooded id uf you gan do dot same."

"Shure, an' thot wur a bad foight we wur afther havin' back yondther, Cookyspiller," said Patsy.

"Yah, dot vas peen a bad fighd; I vas peen sorry dot I haf losted mine horse. I don'd lige to valk."

"Oi don't blame yez; Oi wouldn't loike to walk, ayther, av Oi wur as fat an' short-legged as phwat yez are afther bein'."

"Oh, mine hait!" placing his hands against the sides of his head and making a terrible grimace.

"Wull, phwat's the madther?"

"Oh, der bain vot vas shooted through mine hait! Id hurted lige der Tickens."

"Phwat's dhe madther wid yez? Can't yez be afther standin' a little pain, begorra?"

"Yah, bud dis is ein pig bain."

"Oh, yez are afther bein' a pig yersilf."

"Dot peen nod der druth, und you vas knowed id. Uf you dalk too much sauciness mit me I vill sit down on yourselluf, und you von't lige dot."

The two talked and quarrelled for an hour, and then they began discussing their manner of procedure.

What should they do? Which way should they go?

Where would they be likely to find their comrades, the brave and dashing "Liberty Boys"?

These were questions which it was hard for them to answer.

They had not been in this part of the country long. It was new to them, and they had no idea which way to go.

Finally they decided to strike out, and trust to luck. They might at least find some place where they could get something to eat, and where Carl could get his wounded head attended to.

He bathed the wound in the water of the Santee, and tied a handkerchief over it, and then the two set out.

They made their way slowly through the timber, going in a southeasterly direction.

It was hard work, as there was a good deal of underbrush and bushes; it was especially hard for Carl, who was short and fat—almost as broad as he was long, indeed.

They kept onward for an hour, talking a part of the time, and complaining of their ill luck, and then they came to a road. It was not a very well beaten highway, but it was a road that was used some, as they could see, and it would make the going so much easier for them that they were delighted.

"Shure, an' it's glad Oi am thot we have found dhe road," said Patsy.

"Yah, dot ish so," from Carl. "I gan valk mit much more easiness, und dot vas so."

"Av Oi wur as fat as yersilf, Cookyspiller, Oi'd lie down an' roll, so Oi would," said Patsy, with a grin.

"You dalk too muchness mit your mout', Batsy Prannigan," said Carl, with dignity.

Then the two walked down the road which extended north and south in as nearly a straight line as timber roads ever extend.

It was now getting well along toward noon, and the two young men were getting hungry, as well as tired.

"It's mesilf could be afther eatin' a fried boot, begorra!" said Patsy.

"Yah, und I Gould ead dwo fried poots, by Shimmanetty."

"G'wan, ye Dootchman. Yez are not twice as hungry as phwat Oi am afther bein', an' Oi know thot same."

"You don'd vas know apout dot; I vas haf some hungri-ness, alretty, lige noddings vat I haf efer had pefore."

"Wull, maybe we'll be afther foindin' a house, afther awhoile, phwere we can get somethin' to ate."

"I vas peen hoping dot."

Half an hour later they came to a farmhouse. It was a log house, but a very good-sized one. It stood back from the road a distance of fifty yards, and had a porch in front. Seated on the porch was a roughly-dressed, ungainly man.

"Shure, an' we'll be afther seein' av dhe spalpane'll give us a bite to ate, begorra," said Patsy.

"Uf he don'd vas peen willin' ve vill dake vat we vant, anyhow," said Carl.

"Thot's roight; shure, an' we are soldiers, an' must have food to ate."

They advanced to the porch, and greeted the man, who responded in a friendly manner.

When they asked if they could have something to eat, he replied:

"Of course ye kin; I think dinner's jest erbout ready. I'll see erbout et, an' tell the old woman ter put in some extra slices uv bacon."

The youths sat down, while the man went into the house.

He came out again in a few minutes, and nodded his head.

"Dinner'll be ready in erbout ten minnets," he said. "Ther old woman had our dinner cooked, but she'll have ter cook some more now thet ye are heer."

"All roight, sur," said Patsy. "Oi hope she'll cook plinty, fur it's mesilf is hungry as a bear, begorra."

"Yah, und I vas peen so hungry lige swei pears," said Carl.

"Er Dutchman an' a Irishman," said the settler, eyeing the youths wonderingly. "Who ar ye two fellers, ennyhow, an' whut ye doin' in this part uv ther kentry?"

"Wull yez answur me one question, sur?" asked Patsy. "Sartinly. Whut is et?"

"Phwiche are yez, king's man er pathriot?"

"I'm er patriot, an' I don't keer who knows et."

This suited the youths, and they told the settler the story of the battle of Camden, and how the patriots had been beaten bad, and routed completely.

The settler was surprised, and was very sorry to hear of the defeat of the patriots.

"Thet's bad," he said, with a shake of the head. "I'm moughty sorry ter heer thet."

"Yah, ve vas peen sorry to hear dot, oursellufs," said Carl.

They told the settler that they were members of "The Liberty Boys of '76," and he said that he had heard of them.

Presently the "old woman," as the settler called his wife, came to the door and announced dinner, and the three went into the house, and to the kitchen; but before eating, the two youths washed their face and hands.

They ate dinner, and it was plain that the two had told the truth when they said they were as hungry as bears. The settler and his wife were glad to see their guests eat, however, and there was plenty of food, though not much in the way of variety, it being principally corn bread and bacon, with coffee—or an imitation of coffee, rather—made from corn meal browned in the oven.

After dinner Patsy dressed the wound in Carl's scalp, and the Dutch youth said he felt as good as new.

"I pelief I gould thrash a regiment uf der Pritish soldiers all py mineselluf, now," he declared. "I vas feel so much petter as pefore."

Then the settler and the two youths went out on the porch and sat down to take it easy, and let their dinner settle, and they had been there perhaps half an hour when an exclamation escaped the lips of Carl.

"Dere vas come der 'Lipperty Poys,' by Shimmanetty!" he cried, pointing up the road.

The others looked, and saw a large party of horsemen coming toward the house, from the north.

"Begorra, an' yez are afther bein' roight, Dootchy," said Patsy, a look of delight in his eyes. "Av it ain't dhe 'Liberty Byes,' Oi'm a loir, so Oi am!"

CHAPTER II.

THE "LIBERTY BOYS" DECIDE TO HELP MARION.

The battle of Camden had indeed been a disastrous one for the patriot army.

It had been routed, utterly—scattered to the four winds.

General Gates had become mixed up with the fleeing patriot militia, and had been rushed along a distance of several miles before he could get free from the midst of the men; and then, realizing that it would be useless to try to gather the soldiers together again, he rode onward, as he did not wish to fall into the hands of the victorious redcoats.

There is not much use of following General Gates farther; the defeat of his army at Camden was really due to his own lack of generalship. He had committed a series of blunders, and the result was the utter defeat and rout of his army. It ended his career as a general, and he did not figure to any extent in the war after that terrible 16th day of August, 1780.

As has been stated, among the patriots who fought on the battlefield of Camden was a company of youths known as "The Liberty Boys of '76." They were mounted on horses, and did splendid work, but when they saw that defeat was to be the portion of the patriot army they retreated, along with the rest. They brought up the rear, and held the British in check, and in this way prevented the wholesale slaughter of the fleeing soldiers that would otherwise have taken place.

And when at last the British ceased to pursue, the "Liberty Boys" stopped and held a council.

What should they do?

Where should they go?

They felt sure that the patriot army had been struck such a hard blow that it would not get together again as an army. It had been scattered far and wide. This being the case, what should they do?

"Say, Dick, I'll tell you what let's do," said Bob Estabrook, who was the chum and righthand man of Dick Slater, the captain of the company of "Liberty Boys."

"What, Bob?" asked Dick.

"Let's hunt the 'Swamp Fox' up, and join his band."

"Yes, yes!" cried Mark Morrison. "Let's help Marion!"

The young captain of the "Liberty Boys" looked around upon the faces of the members of his company.

"What do you say?" he asked.

The youths were all in favor of doing this, and said so.

"But we don't know where to look for Marion," said one.

"True," agreed Dick, "but I think we will be able to find him sooner or later."

"I have heard that he has his quarters in the timber along the Santee River," said Sam Sanderson.

"Yes, and I have heard that he has haunts and rendezvous in the swamps," said Bob Estabrook.

"Well, we will risk finding him if the majority of you wish to hunt him up and join his band," said Dick.

"We are in favor of doing it," was the cry.

"Yes, yes! We will go and help Marion!" cried others.

"All right; that is settled, then," said Dick. "And now I think we had better turn around and head toward

the south, as we will likely find Marion down in that direction, I am confident."

"We had better keep over toward the east, so as to not get too close to Camden," said one of the youths.

"Yes, that is true; we must not let the British get sight of us."

They turned their horses' heads toward the south, and rode in that direction. When they came to a crossroad they turned toward the east, in order to get around Camden, and avoid being seen by the British.

They had to go three miles in the new direction, before they came to another crossroad, and then they turned toward the south once more.

They rode in this direction about two miles, and then, coming to another crossroad, they turned toward the west.

They rode three miles, and found themselves in the timber.

Half a mile farther they came to a road running north and south. It wound this way and that, was "crooked as a dog's hind-leg," as Bob expressed it; but not caring to go farther toward the west, they turned toward the south.

They continued onward for an hour, and it was now about noon. The "Liberty Boys" had gone several miles toward the north, after the battle of Camden, before they had come to a stop, and had ridden a long distance, since making up their minds to go farther south and join Marion.

"I'm getting hungry," said Bob Estabrook.

"So am I," said Dick.

The others all said the same.

"Well, perhaps we will come upon a settler's home pretty soon," said Dick. "Then we will have something to eat."

They rode onward slowly, for the road was narrow and crooked, and presently they got to talking of the battle, and some of them called the attention of the rest to the fact that they had lost eight of their number.

"Yes," said Dick. "I have noticed that eight of the boys are missing, and they were brave boys and true; but I fear we shall never see them again."

"Jove, Patsy Brannigan and Carl Gookenspieler are among the missing," said Bob, a sad look on his face. "I'm mighty sorry for that, for they were a whole show, and kept us in good spirits, no matter how blue the outlook might be. They were indeed a lively couple."

"Yes," said Dick, "I saw them go down; both fell at almost the same time."

"I saw them," said Sam Sanderson. "I tried to get near them, to see if they were killed, but a lot of redcoats got in between, and I was forced to keep on moving."

The "Liberty Boys" talked about Patsy and Carl for some time, and presently they rounded a bend in the road and came in sight of a house perhaps a third of a mile distant.

"I guess we will be able to get something to eat now," said Dick.

"I hope so," said Bob. "I'm might hungry."

As the party drew nearer to the house they saw three persons sitting out on the porch.

When they were yet one hundred yards away, two of the three rose and started toward the fence, the other rising almost immediately afterward, and following more leisurely.

"Great Guns, Dick!" almost gasped Mark Morrison, "if there isn't Patsy and Carl!"

"You're right!" exclaimed Dick, a look of pleasure on his face.

"It's Patsy and Carl, alive and well!" from Sam Sanderson.

"Hurrah!" cried Bob, and he urged his horse forward at a gallop, and stopping in front of the house, leaped off and ran and threw one arm around Patsy and the other around Carl, and went whirling around and around, singing at the top of his voice.

"Be afther littin' go av me," said Patsy, struggling to get free.

"Yah, don'd vas make so much foolishness mit yourselluf," squawked Carl. "I gannod tance, und I don'd vant to tance."

"Boys, you don't know how glad I am to see you alive and well," said Bob. "I feel like dancing and singing, I tell you."

"Vell, tance mit yoursellufs, then," said Carl. "I vas nod so goot at dot kind uf vork."

"Shure, an' Dootchy, isn't built fur dancin', begorra," grinned Patsy.

Bob freed the two, and by this time the youths had all dismounted and had surrounded the two youths.

"We thought you two had lost your lives," said Dick.

"No, ve vas losted only our horses, Tick," said Carl.

"Thot wur 'all, Dick," said Patsy. "Whin our horses wint down we managed to get into dhe timber an' get away, begorra."

"Well, we are all very glad to hear it. We are glad to see you, for a fact."

"Und ve vas glat to see you poys, you pet me mine life," said Carl.

Then Dick turned to the settler, and introduced himself.

"We would like to get something to eat, sir," he added, after shaking hands with the man.

"All right; I guess we kin accommerdate ye," was the reply. "I kin furnish ye with plenty uv meat an' corn bread."

"That will do nicely."

"All right; an' d'ye want feed fur ther hosses?"

"Yes."

"Lead 'em aroun' ter ther stable, then. Thar won't be room in ther stable, but ye kin tie 'em ter trees an' give 'em ther feed on ther groun'."

"Yes, so we can; that will do nicely."

Jim Small—such was the settler's name—led the way around behind the house, to the stable, where the youths proceeded to tie the horses to trees.

Mr. Small showed the youths where to look for the feed, and then added:

"I'll go ter ther house an' set ther ole woman ter work, cookin'."

"Very well, and thank you," said Dick.

The patriot farmer went to the house and told his wife that the young men wanted their dinner, and that she would have to get to work and cook it.

"Goodness me, Jim," she said, "et'll take two hours ter cook all them fellers'll want."

"Kain't he'p et, ole woman; go erhead an' do et ez quick ez ye kin. Ye kain't do it enny quicker nor whut ye kin do et."

"Well, I guess I kain't."

When the youths had finished feeding the horses Dick came to the house and told Mr. Small that they would cook the meat, and that would leave only the bread for the woman to cook.

"It will take only about half as long as though she were to do it all," he said, "and will make it easier on her."

"Whar'll ye do yer cookin'?" the man asked.

"We'll build two or three fires here in the back yard."

"Oh, all right."

The youths built four fires, and Mr. Small brought out the meat, while the woman busied herself cooking the bread. By dividing up the work in this manner, dinner was ready for all the youths in an hour's time, and they ate heartily.

They had just finished eating when Mr. Small suddenly caused consternation in the ranks of the "Liberty Boys" by crying out:

"Yender comes er big force uv redcoats!"

CHAPTER III.

DODGING THE REDCOATS.

He pointed up the road as he spoke, in the direction of Camden.

The "Liberty Boys" were on their feet instantly, and looking in the direction indicated.

Dick instantly saw that it was too large a force for his party to attack, as there seemed to be at least five hundred. He fancied he saw men in the midst of the party, wearing blue uniforms, and he thought that he understood the situation. The British were sending a lot of patriot prisoners to Charleston, under guard.

The youth did not wish to get into a battle with this large force, and so he ordered the youths to untie their horses and enter the timber back of the stable.

"We must avoid the enemy," he said. "It is too strong for us."

The youths obeyed the command, and in less than a minute not a "Liberty Boy" was to be seen.

The redcoats had caught sight of the youths, of course,

as they were not more than a third of a mile away, and a couple of officers came riding forward at a gallop, and called to the settler, who made his way out to the fence in front of the house.

"What party was that that just sneaked away in the timber?" one of the British officers asked, sternly.

"I dunno whut party they berlong ter, sir," was the reply.

"What were they doing here?"

"They come erlong heer erbout an hour ergo, sir, an' said ez how they wanted sumthin' ter eat, an' sumthin' fur their hosses, an' uv course I hed ter let 'em hev et—I couldn' he'p myself, ye know."

"I suppose not. How many of them were there?"

"I dunno; 'bout er hunderd, I think."

"All on horseback when they came?"

"Yas, sir."

"Did they say who or what they were?"

"No, sir."

"They must be rebels," said the other officer, speaking for the first time. "They would not have fled at sight of our force, if this were not the case."

"I expeck they air rebels, sir," agreed Mr. Small. "But they didn' say nothin' while they wuz heer, ter let me know whether they wuz er not."

"I'll tell you who they are," said the other officer; "they are that company of cavalry that we saw doing such fierce work in the battle this morning."

"Likely you are right," agreed the other.

By this time the force was up to the house, and came to a stop.

"Let's enter the timber at the back of the house, yonder, and see if we can come upon the rebels," said one of the officers.

Two hundred of the soldiers were ordered to follow, and the force made its way across the yard and past the house and stable, and into the timber.

They searched in all directions, but failed to find any sign of the youths in question.

"They have succeeded in getting away," said the officer. "We will go back."

Dick and his "Liberty Boys" had made a half circuit, moving swiftly, and had struck into the road half a mile below the house, and when the force of British soldiers entered the timber back of the stable in search of them, the youths were riding down the road, toward the south. There was a bend in the road, and they were out of sight.

Patsy and Carl had no horses, but they mounted behind two of the youths, who were riding large, strong horses, and so they got along all right.

Dick and Bob were conversing earnestly as they rode along. They were sure that the British force was taking a party of patriot prisoners to Charleston, and the youths wished to rescue their comrades if such a thing were possible.

"If we could only meet up with General Marion, we would be all right," said Bob.

"Yes," said Dick. "If we could find him, then we could lie in wait for the British at some favorable place, and strike them a strong blow and free the patriot prisoners."

"Well, maybe we can find the 'Swamp Fox.'"

"We will try to do so, at any rate."

"Yes, and if we don't succeed then we will make an effort to rescue the prisoners ourselves."

"So we will; the British shall not take the brave fellows to Charleston if we can prevent it."

"They are on foot, and can move only slowly, while we are on horseback and can make good time."

"Yes; we can get ahead, and then go into camp and send out scouts in all directions in search of Marion. In this way we shall certainly be able to find him before the British succeed in getting to Charleston."

"I think so."

"One thing, we must get hold of a couple of horses from somewhere, for Patsy and Carl."

"So we must; then we will be all right."

"Perhaps we may be able to buy a couple from some patriot settler."

"Perhaps so."

They rode onward, at an ordinary pace, as it would have been too hard on the horses carrying double to have gone fast.

"I don't want to get very far ahead of the British this afternoon, anyway," said Dick. "I want to be close enough to-night so that I can go back and spy on them, and see how many there are, and also how many prisoners they have."

"That will be a good plan; and then we will know just what we will have to do when we find Marion and get ready to strike the enemy a blow and rescue our comrades."

"You are right."

The British officers were disappointed on account of the failure to find any signs of the force of youths—for Mr. Small had told them that the members of the force were all young fellows.

"Say," said one officer, addressing the other, "this man says those fellows are all young, mere youths, in fact. Do you think it is possible that they are the famous 'Liberty Boys'?"

"I was thinking about that," was the reply. "It is not impossible."

"Jove, I wish it were the case, and we could strike them. We would put an end to the career of Dick Slater and his force."

"So we would."

"Let's make inquiries of some of the prisoners."

"That's a good idea."

They went to where the prisoners, one hundred and fifty in number, stood, and asked several if the "Liberty Boys" had been members of the force that had fought against them at Camden, that morning. One of the men said that such was the case.

"I don't see that it will do any harm to acknowledge it," he said. "The 'Liberty Boys' were in the battle, and if all had fought as desperately as they did you would have had a much harder task getting the better of us."

"Well, you fellows fought bravely enough," said one of the officers. He happened to be a fair man, willing to give credit where it was due. "What regiment did you belong to?"

"The First Maryland."

"Well, the First Maryland regiment was all right."

"You see, our trouble was that a large part of our army was made up of militia," the soldier explained, "and they could not withstand a charge. They were not expecting to encounter anything so fierce as that."

"You are right; there are not many forces of militia that will hold their ground when they see a force charging down upon them with fixed bayonets."

"True, sir."

"Well, I wonder if that force that was here just before we got here was the 'Liberty Boys.'"

The soldier shook his head.

"I could not say as to that," he replied.

The officers then went and questioned Mr. Small very closely, but he was a cool, shrewd man, for all he was rough and illiterate, and he was able to deceive the two into the belief that he was a king's man, and that he had given the party of "rebels" food for themselves and feed for their horses because he was forced to do so.

Twenty minutes later the British set out once more, and marched away toward the south.

The officers rode in advance of the main force, and discussed the situation. They were somewhat worried on account of the presence in the vicinity of the force of "Liberty Boys," for they were sure the force in question was that famous company.

"I think we had better send out scouts ahead," said one. "I tell you, those 'Liberty Boys' are daring fellows, and there is no knowing what they may try to do."

"True; they might ambush us."

"Yes, and shoot down a number of our men in cold blood."

"Yes, and we two among the number."

A halt was called, and then ten men were sent ahead, to do scouting.

"Hasten back with the news if anything suspicious is seen," was the order given the men.

They said they would do so, and set out. The force remained where it was nearly half an hour, and then again set out, moving at a leisurely pace.

This was kept up all the afternoon, and although the scouts came back and reported frequently, they had nothing of interest to impart to their officers. They never saw anything at all suspicious, they said.

"Well," said one of the officers to the other, after a scout had reported, "it is possible that the party of rebels did not come this way."

"So it is; I wish we knew that such were the case; then we could rest easy."

"True; and I think it is the case, for were it otherwise, the scouts would certainly have seen or heard something about the enemy."

"One would think they could not have got past the houses along the road without being seen."

Several houses had been passed, and the scouts stated that they had made inquiries at every house they came to, and no one at any of them had seen a party of horsemen pass.

Half an hour before sundown the British went into camp for the night. They were near a farmhouse where a Tory lived, and they would be able to get plenty of good well water, and also some things in the way of provisions.

The officers were given a room in the house, and were invited to eat at the table with the family. As the settler was pretty well fixed, for those times and that region, the officers were glad to accept the invitation, and they were given a supper such as they had not enjoyed for many a day.

They were more than satisfied, and complimented the woman on her excellent cooking, which pleased her greatly.

This settler, like the others that had been questioned that afternoon, said he had not seen any force of mounted men pass.

This made the officers feel much easier in mind.

"I think the 'Liberty Boys,' if that really was them, must have gone back toward the north," said one.

The other agreed with him. But they placed out a double line of sentinels, nevertheless; they believed in making sure, and did not wish to run the risk of being surprised.

"The 'Liberty Boys' have the reputation of being cunning fellows," said one.

"So they have," from the other.

CHAPTER IV.

DARING WORK.

The "Liberty Boys" went into camp on the top of a hill about half an hour before sundown.

"You climb a tree, Bob, and keep watch toward the north," said Dick.

"Watch for the British, Dick?"

"Yes. I don't think they will keep on marching later than this, but they might, and if so, I will want to know if they are coming in this direction."

"All right; up I go."

Bob climbed a tree, and looked toward the north.

"See anything of the redcoats, Bob?" Dick called up to him.

"No, but I see smoke, Dick; several columns of smoke, such as would go up from campfires."

"How far away would you judge the campfires to be?"

"About two miles."

"It is the British force, without a doubt," said Dick. "They have gone into camp."

"Well, stay up there awhile, and make sure of it."

The "Liberty Boys" were busy, unbridling and unsaddling their horses and tethering them in the timber, back from the road a hundred yards or so. Then they built campfires, and got ready to cook their suppers.

"Are you not afraid the enemy will see the smoke of our campfires, the same as we saw theirs, Dick?" asked Bob, who had come down out of the tree.

Dick shook his head.

"No, Bob; I don't think they will look, and if they should they could hardly see the smoke now, for it is growing dusk."

"That's so."

By the time the "Liberty Boys" had cooked and eaten their suppers it was dark, and Dick and Bob held a council.

They decided that they would visit the British encampment, or at any rate get as near to it as possible, and size it up, find out how many soldiers there were, and all about it.

"Another thing I would like to do, Bob," said Dick, "and that is to get hold of the horses belonging to the two British officers. They would do nicely for Patsy and Carl, you know."

"Say, that would be great, Dick!" declared Bob, with a delighted grin. "Let's get those two horses, if possible and make the redcoat officers walk."

"All right. I'm willing to make the attempt, but I fear it will be very difficult, as the horses will be guarded, no doubt."

"Likely enough."

"Well, they will have to be very well guarded, indeed, if we can't capture them."

"You are right."

Bob told Patsy and Carl that they were going to try to capture the British officers' horses for them to ride, and the two were delighted.

"Begorra, an' thot wull be foine," said Patsy, with a broad grin. "Shure, an' Oi'll fale moighty big, Oi'm tillin' av yez, to be sittin' up on dhe horse phwat dhe British officer has been roidin', Oi dunno."

"Yah, dot vas peen der same way mit mineselluf," said Carl. "Ve will ride und let der Pritish arsifers der valkin' done, alretty."

"We may not be able to get the horses," said Bob, "but we'll do our best."

"Shure, an' it's meself wull be afther bettin' thot yez get dhe animals," said Patsy. He had great faith in Dick and Bob.

"Yah, I vas peen betting der same way," from Carl.

The two "Liberty Boys," Dick and Bob, knew it would

not do to try to reconnoiter the British encampment until later in the evening, so they waited till about ten o'clock; then they left the encampment and walked away in the direction of the British encampment.

"We'll ride back," Bob had told the "Liberty Boys," and Mark Morrison had cautioned him, telling him to be careful that they were not prevented from even walking back.

"Oh, the redcoats won't get us," was Bob's reply. "We are too smart for them."

They left Mark in command of the force of "Liberty Boys," as it was always necessary that some one should have authority.

The youths walked briskly for twenty minutes, and then slowed up a bit.

"We will go slow and take it easy now, Bob," said Dick.

"Yes, we might run across a redcoat scout or sentinel."

"That's right."

They walked onward perhaps five minutes longer, and then paused.

"I think we had better leave the road, and enter the timber, Bob," said Dick.

"Likely that will be safest."

"Yes, the sentinels will naturally keep a sharper lookout on the road than in any other direction, and if we continue onward we may be discovered."

They entered the timber on the lefthand side of the road, and moved slowly along through it, listening intently, for they did not know at what moment they might run across a sentinel.

It was slow work, but they had had lots of experience in such work, and did not mind it. Indeed, there was enough danger and suspense in the affair to make it attractive for them.

Presently Bob said in a low, cautious voice:

"I smell smoke, Dick!"

"I was just going to say the same thing, Bob," was the reply.

"Then the British encampment must be close at hand."

"I think so; we will have to be very careful."

They moved forward very slowly, and kept their eyes open, on the lookout for the camp of the enemy.

Presently they caught sight of campfires burning.

"There's the camp," whispered Bob.

"Yes; now we will have to go very slowly, for we may encounter a sentinel at any moment."

"You are right."

They had gone only a short distance, when they saw a dark form outlined against the background of light from the campfires.

"There's a sentinel," whispered Bob.

"Yes; the question is how are we to get near enough to the encampment to see anything, without being discovered by the sentinel?"

"I'll tell you how we can fix it, Dick."

"How?"

"I'll slip up behind the fellow and crack him over the

head with the butt of my pistol. I can knock him senseless and keep him from giving the alarm, and then we will be all right."

"Yes—if you succeed in hitting him right. If you fail to do so he will yell, and arouse the camp."

"But I won't fail. I know just how and where to hit him to put him to sleep."

"All right; go ahead. I guess it is about our only chance."

"All right; don't you fear but what I will make a success of it."

Bob drew his pistol, reversed it, taking hold of the muzzle, and then he stole forward, toward the sentinel, who was standing leaning upon the muzzle of his musket. He should have been pacing back and forth on his beat, and then it would have been more difficult for Bob to put his plan through to a successful issue; that he was not doing this was his own fault and his misfortune.

Bob stole forward, and Dick followed, keeping close behind his comrade; he thought it possible that he would be enabled to be of some assistance to Bob.

Presently Bob was close up to where the sentinel stood. He paused and looked closely to see which way the fellow was facing, and presently discovered that the man was looking toward the camp-fires. There was a game of cards going on beside one of the fires, and it was likely that the sentinel was a fellow addicted to gambling, for he was more interested in watching his comrades play cards than in watching for a possible enemy.

"Well, that suits me first rate," thought Bob. "I'll teach that sentinel a lesson. I'll wager that the next time he stands guard he will keep his face in this direction, and his back to the encampment."

Gripping the muzzle of the pistol firmly, Bob stole forward.

He was soon close up behind the man, and slowly rose from a crouching posture, till he was standing erect. Then he took one more step forward, drew back, and then dealt the sentinel a terrible blow on the head with the butt of the pistol.

The fellow dropped to the ground, as if shot, a gasping groan escaping his lips. His musket dropped from his nerveless grasp, and scraped against a tree in falling, making a noise that could be heard some distance.

One of the soldiers playing cards turned his head, and seemed to be listening.

"I thought I heard a noise," he said.

"So did I," said another.

"Oh, it was nothing," said a third.

"One of the sentinels bumped against a tree, likely," said the fourth card-player.

"I shouldn't wonder but what you are right," said the first speaker. "It is pretty dark."

Then they went ahead with their game, and Bob drew a long breath of relief.

"That was a close call, Bob," whispered Dick, he having stolen close up to where Bob stood.

"Yes; but a miss is as good as a mile. Now, let's tie the sentinel's arms and legs and gag him, so he won't be able to raise the alarm when he comes to."

The youths went to work, and as may be supposed, they had to work very carefully, for they were not more than one hundred feet from the campfire where the card party sat. Lying all around the campfire in question—which was the closest one to where the youths were—were soldiers, asleep.

The "Liberty Boys" bound the insensible sentinel's wrists together with a handkerchief, and then fastened his ankles with his own belt. Then they stuffed a handkerchief in his mouth, and tied another one over it to keep it in.

"There," said Bob, in a cautious whisper, "I guess he won't give the alarm."

"No, we are safe, so far as he is concerned; now to see if we can size up the situation."

They boldly moved forward fifty feet or more, and then, taking up positions behind large trees, began taking a careful survey of the encampment.

They were pretty good judges of such things, and finally decided that there were about four hundred of the British. And they made up their minds, further, that there were about one hundred and fifty prisoners. These were at the center of the encampment, and were surrounded by a dozen guards. It would be an impossibility to get near them.

When they had sized up the enemy all they wished to, the youths stole back to a safe distance, and held a conference.

"Did you see the horses, Dick?" asked Bob.

"Yes; they are over at the righthand side. I got just a glimpse of them."

"Do you think we will be able to get them?"

"I don't know, but we'll make a try for it, anyhow."

"All right; I'm with you."

CHAPTER V.

DICK AND BOB GET THE HORSES.

The youths stole around toward the point where the horses were tethered.

In doing so they suddenly caught sight of another sentinel.

They paused and conferred together.

"Let me go and crack him over the head, like I did the other fellow," said Bob.

"Do you think you can make a success of it, Bob?"

"Well, I'm willing to try; and if I fail it can be helped."

"All right; go ahead; but don't fail, if you can avoid it."

"I won't."

Bob stole toward the sentinel. He drew his pistol as he went, and took hold of the muzzle.

Dick followed, keeping as close as possible, for if Bob was to make a failure, and the sentinel was to give the alarm, they would both have to flee at the top of their speed.

Closer and closer to the sentinel Bob crept. The soldier was standing with his right side toward Bob, and was gazing into the depths of the timber. In order to get behind him it was necessary for Bob to get practically between the sentinel and the encampment, and he managed to do this.

At last Bob was close enough for the purpose, and rising from a crouching to an erect position, he drew back and suddenly dealt the unsuspecting sentinel a blow with the pistol-butt.

The stricken man sank to the earth, without giving utterance to a sound, other than a sort of low, gasping moan, and he lay still.

"Jove, you were successful, Bob," whispered Dick.

"Yes; I was sure I could bring him down without raising a disturbance," was the reply. "Shall we bind his arms and legs and gag him, Dick?"

"That won't be necessary, Bob; he will remain unconscious a few minutes, and that will give us time enough to secure the horses if we are to succeed in doing so at all."

"All right; just as you say."

Then the two stole in the direction of the point where the horses were tied.

As they drew near the place they saw that there were two men standing guard over the animals.

They paused and sized the situation up.

"I guess the officers are afraid the horses might be stolen," whispered Dick.

"Yes; and they don't want to have to do any walking. British officers are averse to doing anything that seems like work."

"I guess you are right; but how are we going to manage this affair? There are two sentinels. Do you suppose we can silence both at the same time, without alarming the camp?"

"I don't know; but we can try. It has got to be done at the same time, for the sentinels are so close together that we could not down one without the other knowing it."

"True; well, we will make the attempt. I will slip up behind one, and you will do the same with the other. When we are ready I will give utterance to a low whistle, at the same time dealing my man a blow with the pistol-butt; then you can treat your man the same way."

"All right; and if either of us makes a failure, and the sentinel gives the alarm, we may be able to get the horses and get away in safety anyway, for the road is near at hand."

"So it is; and we will make the attempt."

Then the two separated, Dick slipping around so as to come up behind one of the sentinels, while Bob made his way cautiously toward the other.

Closer and closer they got, until they were within arms'-length of their intended victims. Dick waited till he saw Bob rise to a standing posture, behind the other

sentinel, and then he gave utterance to a low, tremulous whistle. At the same time he dealt the sentinel a severe blow on the head, dropping him to the ground, insensible.

Bob dealt his man a blow, the next instant, but the fellow had heard the whistle, and it had startled him to such an extent that he started to turn around, with the result that Bob's blow was a glancing one, and did not render the fellow unconscious.

He at once gave utterance to a wild yell, which had the effect of arousing all the men within the sound of his voice—and that was pretty nearly every man in the encampment.

He did not get a chance to yell twice, however; Bob was chagrined on account of his failure to settle the fellow the first blow, and gave him another that did the work effectually, the sentinel sinking down, unconscious.

There was no time to lose, however. The entire camp was astir. There was a babel of voices, and the soldiers were leaping up and seizing their muskets. They were alarmed, for they thought they were attacked by a force of patriots.

Dick and Bob leaped forward to where the horses were, and hunted around till they found the bridles and saddles. They quickly bridled the horses, and then threw the saddles on the backs of the animals, fastened the saddles, cut the rope holding the horses, and led them away in the direction of the road.

As they reached the road they heard wild yells from the direction from which they had just come.

"They have discovered the unconscious sentinels, and the fact that the horses are gone," cried Dick. "Fasten the saddle on, quick, Bob, and then we will get away from here in a hurry."

The two accomplished this, and leaped into the saddles and were away before the British soldiers reached the road, which some of them did as quickly as they could, after finding the unconscious sentinels and discovering that the horses were missing.

They were too late to stop the two "Liberty Boys." Indeed, they heard the clatter of horses' hoofs, and that was all; they did not get a glimpse of the riders.

The two officers in command of the force of British were now out of their tent, making eager and excited inquiries regarding the affair.

"What is the matter, anyway?" cried one. "What is all the noise and confusion about?"

"It is hard to say, exactly, sir," replied a soldier. "I hear that two or three of the sentinels have been found lying unconscious in the timber, and the horses are gone."

"Yes," said another, "and one of the sentinels was tied hand and foot, and gagged!"

"You don't mean to tell me that!" exclaimed the leading officer, a colonel.

"Yes, sir; so they told me over there, just now."

"And you say the horses are missing?" from the other officer, a captain.

"Yes."

"And did no one see who it was that did this work?"

"I judge not."

"Jove, it is bad to lose our horses," said the colonel.

"Yes, indeed," from the captain. "It will be rather hard on us to have to walk."

"Oh, as to that, if we don't recover the horses, we will get a couple more from some settler. I cannot and will not walk."

Then he turned to the man who had given them the information, and said:

"Have the sentinel who was found bound hand and foot and gagged sent here. I wish to have a talk with him."

"Very well, sir," and saluting, the soldier hastened away.

"Shall I take some men and see if we can get on the track of the scoundrels who stole the horses, colonel?" asked the captain.

"Yes, you might do that, though I don't think it will be of any avail. We have no horses to ride, while going in pursuit, and they can easily leave our men far behind."

"True; but we will see what we can do," and he hastened away to attend to the matter.

A few minutes later the sentinel who had been found bound and gagged was brought before the colonel, who asked him how the thing had happened.

"I cannot tell you, colonel," was the reply. "I was standing, keeping a sharp lookout, and of a sudden something struck me on the head from behind, and that was the last I knew until a little while ago, when I came to and found my hands and feet bound, and a gag in my mouth."

"You did not get a sight of your assailant, then?"

"No, sir."

"That is too bad; the scoundrel must have been very skillful to succeed in getting close enough to you to strike you down, and you not hear anything to make you suspicious."

"True, sir; and I heard not a sound."

The colonel then dismissed this man and ordered that the sentinel who had given the alarm be brought before him. The man was soon there, and the colonel asked him for the story of his experience.

The sentinel told it, as nearly as he could. He said that he was standing there, musket in hand, keeping watch, and that of a sudden he heard a peculiar, tremulous whistle; he started to turn, in order to see where the sound came from, when he received a blow on the head. It was a glancing blow, and he had given utterance to the yell that had aroused the camp.

"Then, before I could get a glance at my assailant, I received another blow," the sentinel continued. "That one knocked me senseless, and I knew nothing more until a few minutes ago."

"You say you heard a peculiar, tremulous whistle, and then received the blow on the head?" the colonel asked.

"Yes, sir."

"There were two of the scoundrels, of course," the offi-

cer said, "and the one who dealt the other sentinel the blow that knocked him senseless was the one who gave the signal, the tremulous whistle you heard."

"I judge that you are right, sir."

"Yes, without a doubt."

Presently the captain returned, with the information that he and a force of his soldiers had gone down the road a mile, but had neither seen nor heard anything of the men who had taken the horses.

"They have got safely away," said the colonel, in an angry voice. "The scoundrels! I would give much to know who they were."

"Don't you think they were members of that band of horsemen that we saw to-day?" the captain asked.

The colonel pondered a few moments, and then said:

"It is possible that such is the case."

"And if so, the force must be somewhere down the road in the direction we intend going."

"True; and it will be well for us to look out for the rascals!"

"Yes, indeed. They might strike us when we are not expecting it."

"So they might. Well, we must put out double the number of sentinels that we had out, and instruct them to keep their eyes wide open. It seems that the enemy succeeded in doing about as it pleased, to-night."

A strong guard was placed out, and then the camp again settled down to its former quiet. There was no further trouble, that night.

CHAPTER VI.

IN SEARCH OF MARION.

Dick and Bob were delighted over the success of their expedition.

They had succeeded in sizing the British force up, and had had the pleasure of knocking several of the redcoats senseless; in addition to this, they had succeeded in securing the two horses belonging to the British officers.

"Those two redcoat officers will have to try walking, Dick," chuckled Bob, when they were far enough up the road so that they knew they were safe from pursuit.

"Yes, Bob; but they won't walk far. They will get horses at some farmhouse."

"Likely; well, we will have caused them some trouble, anyway."

"Yes, we have secured a couple of horses without cost to us, and Patsy and Carl will not have to double up with the other boys."

Fifteen minutes later they arrived at the camp, and found a great many of the "Liberty Boys" awake. They wanted to hear the story of the two youths' adventures from their start till their return, and as soon as they had attended to the horses the youths told all.

The "Liberty Boys" were glad to hear of the success that

had attended the efforts of Dick and Bob, and Patsy and Carl were delighted to think that they would have horses to ride next day.

"Don't you think that there is danger that the British will send a party down this way, and that they may discover our camp, Dick?" asked Mark Morrison.

"I hardly think so, Mark. Still, it might be a good idea to place out a double line of sentinels, and thus make it impossible for them to take us by surprise."

"I think that would be a good idea."

So this was done, and when the extra line of sentinels had been sent to its station, the rest lay down and went to sleep.

The night passed quietly. No signs of the British were seen by the sentinels, and the "Liberty Boys" were up bright and early next morning, and after eating breakfast they mounted and rode away toward the south.

Being very desirous of finding General Marion, Dick selected ten of the "Liberty Boys," and sent them out to the right and to the left, with instructions to keep their eyes open, and find the "Swamp Fox," if such a thing were possible.

The party rode all day long, at a moderate pace, but even at that the British force was left far behind, for the men on foot could not walk so fast as the horses could walk, and part of the time the horses trotted or galloped.

Dick felt that they were safe in going on ahead, for he was confident the British force was headed for Charleston with the prisoners.

The "Liberty Boys" went into camp at a point two miles north of the point where the road crossed the Santee River. There was a farmhouse near at hand, and Dick had learned that the man who lived there was a patriot. Bread and meat for themselves, and feed for the horses, was secured, and Dick paid him for the provisions, even though the man said he did not want anything.

"That is kind of you, and I thank you," said Dick; "but you cannot afford to give us so much, and I don't want you to do so. I will pay you a fair price." And he did so.

The farmer's family consisted of himself and wife and three children, a boy of ten and two girls, one thirteen or fourteen, the other about seventeen. The elder girl's name was Lucy, the younger Mabel and the boy was named Tom. The man's name was Robert Harrison.

Dick inquired of Mr. Harrison if he knew anything about General Marion and where he would be likely to be found.

"Why do you wish to find him?" the man asked.

"I will tell you," was the reply. "A large force of British and Hessians is coming, and it has about one hundred and fifty patriot prisoners, and it is my wish to rescue these. If I could find General Marion, and get him to co-operate with me I think we could succeed in doing this."

"Who are you and these men with you?" the settler asked.

Dick told him, and the information seemed to cause the man considerable pleasure.

"Do you really mean to tell me that this is the famous company of 'Liberty Boys'?" he exclaimed.

"I do," replied Dick.

"And are you Dick Slater?"

"I am."

"Shake hands, sir!" the patriot settler exclaimed. "Why did you not tell me who you were sooner?"

"Oh, I thought it was enough to say that we were patriots, sir," with a smile.

"Jove, I have heard of you many times. I am glad to meet you, Mr. Slater; yes, very glad to know you."

Then he insisted that Dick eat supper in the house, with the family, and Dick accepted the invitation in the spirit in which it was made.

"So you want to learn the whereabouts of General Marion, eh?" remarked the settler, when they were seated at the table, eating supper.

"Yes, indeed," was the reply.

"Well, I think I can help you out, Mr. Slater."

"I am glad of that," eagerly. "Do you know where he is?"

The settler shook his head.

"I can't say that I do," he said. "General Marion is a very hard man to keep track of; he is here to-day, there to-morrow. But I know where to find one of the places where he stays quite frequently, and we can go there. If we don't find him we may find someone there who can tell us where to find him."

"True; that will be splendid."

"We will set out after supper."

"Is it far from here?"

"Only about two miles."

"Is it easy of access?"

"Not very; it is in the heart of a great swamp."

"Ah!"

"There is, so far as I know, only one path leading from the mainland to an island in the center of the swamp, and one has to know this path pretty well in order to follow it."

"That makes the island in the swamp a pretty safe hiding-place for the 'Swamp Fox.'"

"So it does."

After supper was over Dick went out and told Bob and the rest of the youths what he had learned.

"You boys remain here in camp," he said, "and I will go with Mr. Harrison and see if we can find General Marion."

"All right," said Bob, "and I hope that you will find him."

"I hope so, for we are now within a couple of miles of the Santee, and that would be a good place to arrange an ambush, and strike the British a blow."

Fifteen minutes later Dick and the patriot settler set out.

They went on foot, as the way was mostly through the timber, and horses would have been more in the way than they would have done good.

"We can walk it in half an hour or so," said Mr. Harrison.

They walked briskly, it not being dark, as yet, though the sun was down.

"Have you ever met General Marion?" the settler asked Dick.

"Oh, yes," was the reply. "I have met him several times, and have been with him on one or two occasions when he was after the redcoats."

It was growing dark when they came to the edge of the great swamp.

"We will just about be able to get across to the island before it becomes dark," said Mr. Harrison.

He quickly found the path which led to the island, and set out, Dick following at his heels. The path wound this way and that, and crooked and turned at a great rate, but Mr. Harrison did not seem to have much difficulty in following it.

A few minutes later they reached the island, and were halted by a sentinel, who stood at the point where the path joined the shore.

The sentinel stood with leveled rifle, and called out: "Who is there?"

"It is I, Robert Harrison," the settler replied.

"Oh, all right; come along."

When they came up to where the man stood, he asked:

"Who is with you?"

"A friend of mine, by the name of Dick Slater."

"What's that! Dick Slater, you say? Can it be Captain Dick Slater, the commander of 'The Liberty Boys of '76'?"

"Yes," replied Dick; "and it seems to me that I have heard your voice before, my man."

"I guess you have, Captain Slater. I was with General Marion a year ago, down in Georgia, when you and your 'Liberty Boys' helped us make things lively for the redcoats and Tories. My name is Joe Smollett."

"I remember you, Joe; shake hands," said Dick.

The two shook hands, and then Dick said:

"Is General Marion here, Joe?"

"Not right now, Captain Slater; but he will be back before very long."

"You are sure he will be back soon?"

"Pretty sure, sir; he said he would be back shortly after dark, and he will do so, unless he meets up with some redcoats or Tories and is delayed on that account."

"Then we will wait for him."

"Good! Are your 'Liberty Boys' down in this part of the country, sir?"

"Yes; they are in camp about two miles from here."

"Right by my house, Joe," said Mr. Harrison.

"Jove, I'm glad to hear that! I wish your men and ours could work together again, like we did a year ago."

"Perhaps we may do so, Joe; indeed, that is why I have come here to-night. There is some work that needs doing, and I want to tell General Marion what it is, and then help him do it."

"What is the work, Captain Slater?"

"Rescuing some patriot prisoners from the hands of a force of British and Tories."

"Patriot prisoners?"

"Yes," and then Dick told about the battle of Camden, and how the patriot army had been defeated and scattered to the four winds, and many of the patriot soldiers captured.

The patriot was sorry to hear of the defeat of the patriot army, but was excited over the prospect of setting the prisoners free.

"General Marion will be eager to do that," he said. "It is just the kind of work he likes."

"How many men has he now, Joe?" asked Dick.

"One hundred and ten."

"And we have nearly a hundred. That will give us a force of about two hundred, and with that number of men we ought to be able to put the British to flight and free the prisoners."

"I should think so; how many men have they?"

"About four hundred."

"Well, we will be able to more than offset that by taking them by surprise, from ambush."

"So I think."

"Yes—ah, there comes General Marion now, I will wager."

Then the sentinel called out:

"Who comes there?"

"It is I, General Marion," was the reply.

"Very well, sir; here is someone who wishes to see you."

"Ah, indeed! Who is it?"

"Captain Dick Slater!"

CHAPTER VII.

GETTING READY FOR THE REDCOATS.

An exclamation escaped the lips of General Marion, and he came forward hastily. It was not so dark, but what it was possible to see features at close quarters, and he recognized Dick at once.

"Dick," he said, as he grasped the youth's hand and pressed it warmly, "I'm glad to see you!"

"And I am glad to see you, General Marion," said Dick.

There were perhaps fifty men with Marion, and they crowded around, eager to hear what was said. Many of them had been with the "Swamp Fox" the year before, down in Georgia, when Dick and his "Liberty Boys" had been with them, and these were eager to greet Dick. Of course, they did not intrude themselves at this time, however, for they knew their commander was eager to talk to the young man.

"What in the world brings you down in this part of the country, Dick?" the "Swamp Fox" asked.

"Myself and men were with General Gates' army, sir," was the reply.

"Ah, yes; General Gates was, so I heard a week ago, advancing upon the British and Hessians at Camden. How did it come out—or have they met as yet?"

"Yes, the battle was fought just the other side of Camden, yesterday, General Marion."

"Ah, indeed! And how did it come out?"

"The patriot army was badly beaten, sir."

"Too bad, too bad! But do you know, Dick, I feared that would be the result when I heard of the expedition. I fear Gates did not use as good judgment as he might have used."

"Well, it is not for me to say, sir, but I know that he went contrary to the advice and counsel of the majority of his staff officers."

"Bad, very bad; I tell you, when a general has good officers on his staff he should ponder well the words of counsel which they give utterance to."

Then the general shook hands with Mr. Harrison, and invited him and Dick to go to the encampment. They did so, it being less than a quarter of a mile distant. Here fires were blazing, which made it light enough so they could see one another quite plainly.

A number of Marion's men came and shook hands with Dick. They had been with the "Swamp Fox" down in Georgia the year before, and remembered Dick well. He remembered the majority of them, and greeted them heartily.

Then Marion, Dick, and Mr. Harrison took seats on a bench standing against a large tree, and entered into conversation.

Dick told General Marion why he was there; and when the "Swamp Fox" learned that a party of British and Hessians was coming that way, with one hundred and fifty patriot prisoners, he gave utterance to exclamations of satisfaction.

"That is fine," he said; "that is splendid. We will strike the enemy a blow that will long be remembered by those who succeed in making their escape."

"Yes, and we will rescue the prisoners," said Dick.

"So we will; this is going to be work that is just to my taste."

"And mine," said Dick. "I shall be glad to strike the enemy a blow; it will help even up matters for the defeat at Camden."

"Yes, so it will."

Then the "Swamp Fox" asked Dick when the British would reach the vicinity.

"I should judge that they would get this far by the middle of to-morrow afternoon," was Dick's reply.

General Marion was silent for a few moments, pondering; and then presently he said:

"I think that the best place to arrange the ambuscade will be just this side of the Santee River. There are hills, there, and timber, and we will be able to strike the enemy a severe blow, and without much danger to ourselves."

"You know the country, while I do not, and whatever you say for us to do will be done," said Dick. "I wish you

to take full command, and myself and 'Liberty Boys' will fall right in line and help you all we can."

"All right, Dick," was the reply. "I will take command, and I feel confident that we shall be enabled to put the enemy to utter rout and rescue the patriot prisoners."

"That will be splendid, sir, if we can put it through to a successful issue."

"I have not the least doubt regarding our ability to do that, Dick; you know how my men fight, and I have not forgotten how your 'Liberty Boys' can fight. As I understand it the British will outnumber us only about two to one, and that is not great odds, especially when we take the enemy by surprise."

"True, sir, and I think your men and mine are equal to at least double their number, under equal circumstances, so with the advantage of ambushing the enemy and taking it by surprise, we should have no trouble in accomplishing our purpose."

"That is the way I look at it."

They talked for an hour longer, and matured their plans, after which Dick bade the general good-night, shook hands with him, Mr. Harrison doing the same, and then the two took their departure.

Mr. Harrison was quite familiar with the path leading from the island to the shore, and he led the way, Dick following closely, and they soon reached the mainland, and set out toward the settler's home.

They reached the house after a walk of three-quarters of an hour, and Mr. Harrison asked Dick to come in and spend the night.

"There is an extra room," he said, "with a good bed in it. You might just as well come in and spend the night comfortably as not."

"Is it a double bed?" asked Dick.

"Yes."

"Very good. I will have my friend and chum, Bob Estabrook, come in and occupy the bed with me."

"Very well."

The settler entered the house, while Dick went to the encampment. A number of the boys were sitting up, but the majority had lain down on their blankets and gone to sleep.

"Well, what luck?" asked Bob Estabrook, who was one of those who were still up. "Did you find the 'Swamp Fox'?"

"Yes, we found him, Bob."

"Good! How many men has he?"

"One hundred and ten."

"Hurrah! That will give us a force of two hundred, and we will be able to knock the spots out of the British and Hessians."

"Yes, I think we shall be able to beat them."

Then Dick told all about his trip to the island in the swamp, and the youths listened with interest.

When they were through talking, they spread their blankets, and lay down—all save Dick and Bob. These

two went to the house and were shown to the spare room, where they found a good bed, as Mr. Harrison had said.

They were soon in bed, and slept like a top till morning.

Mr. Harrison insisted that both should take breakfast at the table with the family, and they accepted the invitation. In truth, it was a treat to the youths, for the breakfast was a good one, and a welcome change from the rough camp fare.

After breakfast was over the two youths went out to the encampment. Several of the youths asked Dick what they were to do.

"We will stay right here until noon," said Dick. "I expect General Marion to be here by that time, and then we will decide upon a course of action."

This suited the "Liberty Boys" first rate, for they had been in the saddle every day for weeks, and a short rest would be good for them.

About ten o'clock Dick sent two of the "Liberty Boys" back up the road, toward the north, to keep watch for the redecoats.

"Go about a mile," he told them, "and then climb trees and keep a sharp lookout; it is our intention to surprise them, and we must not let them surprise us."

"All right," said Sam Sanderson, who was one of the two. "I suppose you will want us to hasten back here with the news as soon as we catch sight of the enemy?"

"Yes, Sam, get back just as quick as you can after you catch sight of them."

"Supposing we don't catch sight of them before noon," then what?"

"Why, stay till you do catch sight of them."

"All right; but we'll have to take some grub along with us. We'll likely get hungry along about noon."

"Certainly, take some food along. I don't want you boys to starve to death."

"I guess there isn't any danger of that."

The two fixed up enough food for a lunch, and took their departure.

About eleven o'clock General Marion and his men put in an appearance. They were given a hearty greeting, and the "Liberty Boys" and such of the men as had been with the "Swamp Fox" down in Georgia the year before, renewed old acquaintance.

"Well, Dick, what's the news?" asked General Marion, as he and the youth shook hands.

"Everything is quiet, sir," was the reply.

"I suppose you sent scouts up the road to keep watch for the enemy?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then there is no need of our being in a hurry about moving."

"No; we will be safe in waiting till we hear from my scouts."

"Very good."

They talked together for nearly an hour, and then were invited into the house to take dinner with the Harrison

family. Mrs. Harrison and her daughters had gotten up a splendid meal, and General Marion and Dick enjoyed it greatly.

About two o'clock the two scouts who had been sent up the road put in an appearance.

"Did you see the British, Sam?" asked Dick.

"Yes, we saw them."

"How far away were they?"

"They were about a mile and a half from us, I should say."

"Then they are about two miles from us now, eh?"

"Just about that, I should say, for we ran most of the way here while they are walking."

"That is all right" said General Marion. "We have plenty of time, but may as well be moving."

Fifteen minutes later General Marion and his men and Dick Slater and his "Liberty Boys" rode away down the road in the direction of the point where the road crossed the Santee River.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE RESCUE.

The Santee River was soon reached, but they did not cross. They stopped on the north shore, and after taking a survey of the surrounding landscape, General Marion led the way up the hill on the left. It was not a steep hill, being more in the nature of a slope, and it was bare, save for bushes here and there, a distance of fifty yards; from there on there was a good, thick growth of timber.

The two parties rode in among the trees, and Dick and the general held a consultation.

"Shall we dismount and tie our horses, and make the attack on foot, or shall we remain on horseback and charge the scoundrels in that manner?" asked General Marion.

Dick thought for a few moments, and then said:

"I believe it would be a good plan to stay on horseback. Don't you?"

After a few moments' thought, the general nodded.

"I guess you are right," he said. "Yes, I am in favor of remaining on horseback. It will enable us to charge down upon the enemy in much quicker time, and the charge will seem much more terrible than if we were on foot."

"You are right; when the redcoats see two hundred horsemen dashing down upon them at full speed, firing muskets and pistols, they will have to be braver than any lot of British soldiers I have ever seen if they stand their ground and try to make a fight."

"That is the way I look at it; I think we can kill a goodly number and put the rest to flight, and very quickly at that."

"Yes; we will take them by surprise, and that ought to count for a great deal."

"It will do so."

The word was sent around that the men were to remain on their horses and make the charge on horseback, and this seemed to meet with general approval.

"It's the right thing to do, Dick," said Bob.

The others said the same.

Then General Marion addressed a few words to the men, instructing them what was expected of them. He told them that they were to dash out from among the trees at the signal, which would be a tremulous whistle from the lips of Dick Slater, and ride at full speed straight down toward the enemy.

"A second shrill whistle will be the signal to begin firing," he told them, and after that they were to draw their pistols and keep on firing rapidly as possible.

"Be very careful not to hit the prisoners, however," he cautioned them. "They will be in a bunch, near the middle of the British force, so fire at the soldiers toward the ends of the force, and not right into the middle of the crowd."

The youths and the general's men said they would remember, and all got ready for lively work, for the enemy would be along soon.

"They may stop awhile at Mr. Harrison's," suggested Dick.

"They may, but I don't think they will," was the reply. "There is a Tory settler living four miles south of the Santee, and I think they will try to reach his place before supper time."

"I hope so," said Dick.

Not much more was said, as it was desirable that there should be no noise, so they would hear the British coming.

There was a bend in the road a quarter of a mile distant, so it would be impossible to see the redcoats until they rounded the bend. Of course, scouts could have been placed up the road, but this was not deemed necessary.

Presently a couple of horsemen rode around the bend in the road and came slowly onward. The two horsemen were evidently British officers; behind them came soldiers, marching along at a leisurely pace. First there were some British soldiers, and then some Hessians, and in this way they were alternated. About the middle of the force, when it had all come in sight, were men wearing blue uniforms, and these were the patriot prisoners.

General Marion and Dick Slater glanced down the lines of rangers and "Liberty Boys," and saw that every man had musket or rifle held in readiness for instant use.

The British and Hessians marched slowly along, unsuspecting of danger; this was evident, for they were talking and laughing, and they did not look to the right or to the left, as men would have done who were suspicious that danger lurked near.

Dick watched the enemy till the force was almost opposite the point where they were, and then he turned his head and glanced toward General Marion. The next moment the "Swamp Fox" turned his head and nodded to Dick. This was his signal to Dick, and the youth instant-

ly gave utterance to the peculiar, tremulous whistle which he always used when he wished his men to charge.

The next instant two hundred horsemen burst out of the timber in response to the signal.

The "Swamp Fox" and Dick Slater, followed by their men, dashed upon the British and Hessians at full speed, and fired a volley into their ranks at short range.

The British were utterly demoralized.

It was no doubt enough to terrify the stoutest-hearted men among them to see two hundred horsemen dashing toward them, firing as they came, and following the musket and rifle volley came two pistol volleys in quick succession.

The British and Hessians fired a scattering volley in return, but they did not stop to take aim, and their shots did not do much damage.

A wild yell went up from the lips of the Rangers and "Liberty Boys," and this, mingling with the shrieks, groans, and yells of the wounded and frightened British, made up a perfect pandemonium, which was enough to upset the nerves of anybody but veteran soldiers.

The Rangers and the "Liberty Boys" had been careful to fire at the British and Hessians who were at the front and rear of the force, and in this way they did not shoot down any of the patriot prisoners. The latter, realizing that they were to be rescued, stood perfectly still; they knew that if they were struck by bullets it would be wholly by accident.

The terrible charge by the two hundred mounted patriots was something against which the British and Hessians could not stand, and those who had not been killed or wounded turned and fled at the top of their speed.

They ran toward the timber on the west side of the road, and when they reached the shelter of the trees they did not stop, but kept right on running. They had had all the fight taken out of them. Then, too, only about half their number were left; nearly two hundred had gone down, dead and wounded. This was one characteristic of attacks made by the "Liberty Boys" or by the Rangers under the "Swamp Fox." They were expert shots, and they usually hit what they shot at under almost any and all circumstances.

The patriot prisoners gave utterance to a yell of delight. They had recognized Dick Slater and his "Liberty Boys," and they gave the youths three cheers.

It was a grand victory for the "Swamp Fox" and his Rangers, and Dick Slater and his "Liberty Boys." Half the total number of the British force lay dead and wounded in the road and the other half had fled in utter demoralization.

General Marion ordered all of Dick's force and half of his own to stand guard and keep watch for the redcoats; he was afraid they might muster up courage enough to come back and fire a volley, and he did not wish to take the chances of losing any of his or Dick's men in this manner.

Then, with the rest of his men he, together with Dick, took a look over the battlefield.

They counted the British and Hessians, and found that there were one hundred and eighty-six of them. Of these, one hundred and thirty were dead, and fifty-six were wounded.

"Well, we certainly did wonderful execution, Dick," said General Marion, when they had finished looking over the field.

"Yes, indeed," the youth replied. "Well, I am glad of it. It evens us up a little for the terrible defeat which we experienced at Camden."

"Yes, and then we have rescued a lot of patriots from the hands of the British, besides."

A number of the Rangers went among the patriot prisoners and cut their bonds, thus freeing them.

To say that the patriot soldiers who had been prisoners were delighted at being free, is putting it mildly; they were almost wild with joy, and they shook hands with the Rangers and thanked them for what they had done, and then crowded around Dick and General Marion and thanked them again and again.

The majority of them knew Dick well, and spoke to him by name; they had never seen General Marion before, however, and when Dick told them who he was the patriot soldiers looked at him with interest, for they had heard many stories about the "Swamp Fox" and his doings.

The British captain had been killed, but the colonel, while seriously wounded, would get well if he could be gotten to where he would be taken care of.

General Marion went and talked with the colonel. He asked the officer what he wished done with the wounded men.

"I would like to have all of them taken across the river to the home of Henry Wilton, who lives about four miles from here. He will do his best to take care of us."

"Very well; we will attend to the matter; I will send a party of my men down there after a team and wagon, and then we will haul the wounded men to this Tory's home."

"Much obliged, sir."

"You are welcome, colonel; we are humane, and have no wish to see wounded men suffer."

Then the "Swamp Fox" sent four of his men after the team and wagon, with instructions to hurry all they possibly could.

"Some of these men are badly wounded," he said, "and need attention."

The four men mounted their horses, forded the river, and then galloped away toward the south.

While they were away General Marion, Dick, and a number of the Rangers and "Liberty Boys" who were skilled in attending to wounds, looked after the wounded redcoats, and dressed the wounds as best they could, washing them with water brought from the river.

This eased the pain of the wounds some, and caused the soldiers to stop groaning to such an extent as had been the case before.

An hour from the time the four men left they were back, and they brought two teams and wagons with them, the

teams being driven by a man and a boy of fifteen or sixteen. These were the Tory, Henry Wilton, and his son.

The two wagons had to make two trips, to get all the wounded soldiers to the Tory's home, and by that time it was sundown.

General Marion and his Rangers and Dick Slater and his "Liberty Boys" buried the dead redcoats and Hessians, and then went back up the road to the home of Mr. Harrison.

He gave them a warm welcome and asked what had been the result of the encounter.

"Well, here are the prisoners the British had in their midst when they passed your house," said General Marion, indicating the patriot soldiers who had been rescued, "and we just finished burying more than one hundred redcoats before we came back up here."

"Good! I'm glad to hear it," said the patriot settler.

CHAPTER IX.

DICK RECONNOITERS.

After supper that evening General Marion and Dick Slater held a consultation.

They had succeeded in striking the British a severe blow and rescuing the patriot prisoners, but now what should they do next?

What would the British try to do?

Dick asked General Marion what he thought would be the course of the British, and after a period of pondering he said:

"Well, I'll tell you, Dick; I think they will make an attempt to run us to earth and strike us a blow in return for the one we dealt them."

"You really think that, sir?"

"Yes."

"Well, what are you going to do?"

"I'll tell you. I shall retire to my rendezvous in the swamp, keep myself posted by means of scouts whom I will send out, and then, when the British come down in this part of the country, I will see if I can strike them another blow."

"Good!" exclaimed Dick. "I will stay here with you, and help you."

"I shall be very glad to have you stay, Dick, if you can do so."

"I can, sir; General Washington, when he sent me down into this part of the country, said for me to stay as long as I could be of benefit to the patriots of the South."

"He left it to your own judgment how long you were to stay, eh?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, stay with me awhile longer, anyway, and help me make it warm for the British of Camden."

"I will do so. I wish to get even with the redcoats for

the manner in which they defeated the patriot army at the battle of Camden anyway, and it will be very pleasing to me to stay here and strike them a few hard blows."

"Good! And the one hundred and fifty soldiers that we rescued, they will stay also, I am sure, and that will give us quite a nice little army."

"Yes, there will be between three hundred and four hundred men."

This having been settled, the entire party, consisting of at least three hundred and fifty men, took its departure from the patriot home, and made its way to the encampment or rendezvous in the swamp.

Here the men made themselves as comfortable as was possible.

They remained in camp, and no one went over to the mainland that night, for, as General Marion said, there was no likelihood that the enemy would show up very soon. The two hundred soldiers who had fled when attacked by Marion's Rangers and Dick Slater's "Liberty Boys," would have to walk clear back to Camden, and carry the news of the disastrous affair, after which the British would send a force, undoubtedly, but this would take a day and a half, or longer.

"We will simply rest here and take it easy till the enemy puts in an appearance in the vicinity," said Marion, "and then we will see what we can do to make it interesting for the British."

Next morning half a dozen of the Rangers were sent over to the mainland by the "Swamp Fox," with instructions to keep a sharp lookout both to the north and to the south.

"I expect the enemy to come from the north, from Camden," said Marion, "but a force might come up from Charleston; so it will be necessary to be on the lookout in both directions."

The scouts said they would keep their eyes open.

"We'll see the British before they get within five miles of here, no matter which direction they come from," said one.

"That's right," said the "Swamp Fox," approvingly.

Then the scouts took their departure.

Dick Slater managed to remain in camp till after dinner, and then he told General Marion that he believed he would go over to the mainland and look around a bit.

"All right, Captain Slater," was the reply. "But you will do well to keep a sharp lookout around you; there are a good many Tories in these parts."

"I'll be on my guard."

The youth left the encampment, and made his way across to the mainland, he not having much difficulty in following the crookings and windings of the narrow pathway in the daytime.

Reaching the mainland, he stood, hesitating for a few moments, and then turned and walked toward the home of Mr. Harrison.

"I'll go there and ask him if he has seen or heard anything of the British," thought Dick.

Half an hour later he was at the Harrison home, and found Mr. Harrison there.

They were all glad to see Dick, and gave him a warm greeting.

"Glad to see you, Captain Slater," said Mr. Harrison, shaking the youth's hand heartily.

"The same to you, sir; but have you seen or heard anything of the British since we left here yesterday evening?"

"Not a thing, my boy. Everything has been quiet."

"Well, I don't look for the British to get here before to-morrow sometime, as it is quite a long ways to Camden."

"True. But aren't you afraid that such a strong force will come down here that you won't dare attempt to offer to fight?"

"No; they would have to bring practically their whole army to make that possible, for we have three hundred and fifty men, and they are all fighters, too."

"Well, I hope you will beat the redcoats every time."

"So do I; we will do it, too, if we have half a chance. You see, we have the advantage, in that we know the lay of the land hereabouts, and they don't."

"That's so. They know the road from Camden to Charleston, but that is all; get them off the main road and they would be lost."

"Yes, that's it, exactly; and that is where we have a big advantage."

After some further conversation Dick expressed the wish that he could get across the Santee River.

"I would go down and reconnoiter the Wilton home, and see what is going on there," he said.

"I'll lend you a horse to ride across the stream on, Captain Slater; or, if it would suit you better, I have a boat hidden amid the bushes, up the river a ways from the ford, and you could use that."

"I'll use the boat," Dick said. "I might lose the horse, through his being stolen by a Tory while I was making my reconnoitering expedition."

"I would be willing to risk that; but the boat will answer your purpose quite as well, I judge, since you simply wish to use it as a means of getting across the river."

"That's it; once I am across, I would rather walk than ride the horse. It would be a difficult matter doing much in the way of reconnoitering on horseback."

"That's so. Well, I'll go with you, and show you where the boat is hidden."

"I hate to bother you; doubtless I can find it all right."

"No bother at all; I haven't anything else to do this afternoon, and might as well go as not."

They set out, and half an hour later were standing on the bank of the river.

"My boat is up this way about a quarter of a mile," said Mr. Harrison, and he turned to the right, and led the way along the shore, Dick following.

Presently the man paused where a great clump of bushes overhung the stream, and going close down to the

edge of the water, he lifted some of the bushes, and revealed to Dick's sight a flat-bottomed boat.

"There. How will that do?" he asked.

"Splendidly," said Dick. "That will be just the thing."

"All right; you are welcome to use it whenever you like, so long as you are in this part of the country."

"Thank you, Mr. Harrison."

Then Dick got in and took up the oars, while the patriot settler untied the painter. When he had done this, he asked:

"Are you ready?"

"All ready," replied Dick.

"Very well; away you go." Then he pushed the boat out from under the bushes.

Dick bent to the oars and rowed straight across the stream, Mr. Harrison standing on the bank and watching him.

When he reached the farther shore Dick leaped out, pulled the boat up under some bushes, and tied the painter.

Then he waved his hand to Mr. Harrison, and plunging into the timber, strode away toward the south.

It was a good hour's walk to the home of the Tory, Henry Wilton, and Dick strode onward at a good pace.

Nearly an hour later he came to a stop at a point a quarter of a mile from the home of the Tory.

He paused long enough to see that everything seemed to be quiet at the farmhouse, and then he moved forward, but in a circuitous manner, so as to approach the house from the rear.

It did not take him long to reach a point from which to keep a good watch of the premises. This was just behind the stable, and he could watch the house without being in much danger of being seen by anyone at the house.

He had been there perhaps half an hour when he heard the clatter of hoofbeats, and looking down the road toward the south he saw a horseman coming at the best speed of the horse he was mounted on.

A glance was all that was necessary to show him that the newcomer was not a British soldier.

The rider brought the horse to a stop at the bars which opened into the barnlot, and leaping down, he let down the bars and led the horse through. Then he put up the bars and led the horse to the watering trough, to let the animal drink.

"Oh, I know who the fellow is now," said Dick to himself, "it is the son of the Tory who lives here. Now, I wonder where he has been?"

When the horse had finished drinking, and the youth started to lead him to the stable, a man came out of the house and hastened out to where the youth was.

"There's the Tory himself," thought Dick. "Now I may be lucky enough to learn where the boy has been."

"So you have got back, Tom?" cried the man, as he approached the boy.

"Looks that way, don't it?" was the rather crusty reply.

"Yes; but how was everything at Charleston? Did you see the commanding officer there?"

"Yes."

"And did you tell him about the wounded soldiers that are here?"

"Of course; that's what I went there for, wasn't it?"

"Yes; what did the commandant say?"

"He said that he would send surgeons and ambulances at once, and have the wounded men taken to Charleston, where they could be given attention."

"When will the ambulances and surgeons get here?"

"Some time to-morrow, likely."

"Well, I'm glad to hear that. I tell you, I don't like the job of taking care of half a hundred wounded men."

"The commandant said he would send up some soldiers to hunt down the rebels that did this work," said the boy, as he led the horse to the stable.

"Good! I'm glad of that. Then if they send down some from Camden, which I am confident they will do, they ought to be able to run the rebels to earth and exterminate them."

"They will have a hard job doing that," said Dick to himself, grimly. "I don't think they can get a sufficient number of redcoats down in this part of the country to do that."

After some further conversation, while the boy was unbridling and unsaddling his horse, and giving it some feed, the two left the stable and made their way to the house.

"Well, I've learned something, at any rate," said Dick aloud, when the two had disappeared from sight in the house.

"Yas, but et won't do ye enny good, young feller!" said a hoarse voice, and whirling, Dick found himself confronted by a tall, gaunt, rough-looking man, who had him covered with two huge pistols.

CHAPTER X.

DICK AND THE TORY.

The "Liberty Boy" stood perfectly still, and looked at the fellow for nearly half a minute before speaking, and then he said:

"Hello, who are you?"

"Et took ye er long time ter think uv sumthin' ter say," said the fellow, with a grin.

"I was trying to think what not to say, my friend," was the quiet reply. "But who are you, anyhow, and why have you slipped up behind me in this fashion?"

"Waal, ef ye wanter know who I am, I'll tell ye. My name is Sam Jenks."

"That's a lovely name," said Dick, with quite a serious air.

"Whut's thet?" cried the man. "Say, air ye tryin' fur ter poke fun at me?"

"Oh, no; not at all. But why have you slipped up behind me, and covered me with those pistols?"

"So as ter keep ye frum runnin' erway."

"Oh, you don't need to hold the weapons out that way, then, for I shali not run away."

"No, I know ye won't. I'll see ter et thet ye don't."

"What do you want?" asked Dick quietly.

"I want ter know whut ye air doin' heer, hidin' berhind ther stable."

"Is it your stable?"

"No; et's Hank Wilton's stable; but him an' me is frien's, an' when I seen ye hidin' heer I made up my min' thet I'd see whut ye wuz up ter."

"Oh, that's it?"

"Yas; but now thet I've got er good, clost look at ye, I bergin ter think thet mebbly I've done er better thing than I thort I wuz doin'."

"Why so?"

"Bercoos I've made up my min' thet ye air er rebel, thet's w'y; an' we don' like rebels aroun' heer."

"Oh, you're mistaken, my friend."

The fellow shook his head.

"I don't think so," he said.

"You are, nevertheless. I'm no rebel."

The man looked skeptical. "Ye kain't make me berleeve nothin' uv thet kin'," he said; "an' I'm goin' ter make ye go ter ther house, whur Hank kin hev ther say-so erbout whut shall be done with ye."

"There is no use doing that," said Dick; "it is foolishness. I am no rebel."

"I've got on'y yer word fur thet, an' I don't berleeve ye."

Of course, Dick had no intention of permitting himself to be walked up to the house; that would not do, for Wilton and his son would both recognize him as being one of the members of the force that had struck the British such a hard blow. He had taken a somewhat prominent part in overseeing the work of handling the wounded British and Hessian soldiers the day before, and the Tory and his son would want to make a prisoner of him, and hold him till the British came from Charleston.

While talking to the Tory, Dick was thinking fast, and was turning over and over in his mind plans for getting out of the difficulty in which he found himself. He had sized the rough-looking man up closely, and made up his mind that the fellow was really dangerous.

"He is a hunter and trapper, likely," said Dick to himself, "and I should judge, by his looks, that he would shoot, if it became necessary for him to do so."

Of course, Dick did not wish to give the man a chance to fire, for even if he were to miss, and the bullet did no damage, the report would be heard, and would bring Wilton and his son out there in a hurry, when the three of them would be too much for Dick in a hand-to-hand encounter.

But how was Dick to succeed in getting the better of this fellow, and at the same time prevent him from raising the alarm and bringing the others to his assistance?

Suddenly Dick assumed a look of terror, of horror, and cried:

"Look out, behind you!"

He threw such terror, such horror into the tones, that the man was startled, and involuntarily whirled. Of course, he imagined some terrible danger threatened him from the rear, and it was not till he whirled and saw that there was nothing dangerous behind him that he realized that he had been fooled. Then he whirled back again, with a snarl of rage; but it was too late. He had given Dick the opportunity he was wanting, and as the fellow whirled he received a terrible blow right on the point of the chin.

Dick had put all his force in the blow, for he did not want that the fellow should give the alarm, and his intention was to render the man unconscious by the blow.

He was seemingly successful.

When the Tory struck the ground he lay still. The pistols had dropped from his hands, and Dick picked them up, let down the hammers, and threw the weapons as far as he could, out into the timber.

He glanced down at the seemingly unconscious Tory, and hesitated.

"I guess I might as well be going," he said to himself, after a few moments of thought. "I have learned all that I need know, and had better get away before I get into some more trouble. This fellow will tell Wilton and his son that I was spying on them, though. But, no matter; that can do no hurt. It will make them be a bit more on their guard, that is all. Yes, I'll be going."

He turned and started to walk away, but hearing a noise behind him, turned again quickly, to see what caused it.

To his astonishment the Tory, whom he had supposed to be unconscious, had leaped to his feet, and now, with a snarl not unlike that of an angry wildcat, the fellow sprang at Dick.

The youth managed to hit the Tory a pretty hard blow, but it was not sufficient to knock him down, and the fellow got hold of the "Liberty Boy" and quickly closed with him.

"Now I've got ye!" the fellow snarled. "I'll choke ther life ha'f outer ye, ye blamed rebel!"

"Oh, will you?" cried Dick. "That remains to be seen."

Then a terrible struggle began.

The fear in Dick's mind was that the Tory would call out for help, but he did not seem to think of that at all; his sole idea seemed to be to get the better of his youthful opponent.

Doubtless he thought he would be able to do so without much trouble, now that he had succeeded in getting hold of the youth.

His idea, no doubt, was that he was much stronger than his opponent, and would be able to easily overcome him in a hand-to-hand combat.

But this was where he made a mistake. Few men were the equal of Dick Slater in a contest of this kind.

The "Liberty Boy" at once began maneuvering to get hold of the Tory's throat. If he could succeed in doing this he could prevent the fellow from crying out for assist-

ance, and would be able to choke him into insensibility very quickly.

This done, he would then have no trouble in getting away without further adventure.

It did not take the Tory long to discover that in the youth he had a foeman not to be despised, and this knowledge made him angrier than ever.

"Ye're purty stout fur er youngster," he growled. "Ye're erbout ther best I ever got holt uv, fur yer age, but ye hain't no match fur Sam Jenks! Thar never wuz er youngster that could git ther better uv me."

"Just wait a little, and you will see," said Dick, calmly. "I think that this time you have met your master, even though I am only a 'youngster.'"

"Bosh! No sech thing. I'll soon git ther better uv ye."

"When you do, let me know."

"Oh, ye'll know all right."

Dick was working away, getting ready to secure the hold on the fellow's throat, and suddenly he succeeded. The instant his fingers closed on the Tory's throat Dick compressed it to such an extent as to make the fellow give utterance to a gasping groan.

The youth's fingers were like bands of steel, and the Tory realized that unless he could get his throat free he would be speedily overcome. He at once began making strenuous attempts to get Dick's fingers loosened from his throat, but all in vain. He could not do it.

Tighter and tighter Dick squeezed, and redder and redder grew the Tory's face. Then it began to turn almost black, and the eyes seemed almost ready to pop out. The man ceased struggling, and his legs doubled up; he would have fallen but for Dick, who held him up.

Presently the Tory gave utterance to a gasp, and Dick knew there was no use of choking him any longer. The fellow was unconscious.

The "Liberty Boy" dropped the man to the ground, and looked at him for a few moments in silence.

"He was a pretty hard fellow to handle," the youth told himself, "but I have yet to find the man who can escape after I once succeed in getting him by the throat. I have an iron grip, and it is of great benefit to me, sometimes."

Then he stepped to the corner of the stable and looked toward the house. No one was to be seen there. All was quiet.

"Well, I guess I will be going," the "Liberty Boy" said to himself. "I can do nothing here."

He turned and walked to the timber, being careful to keep the stable between himself and the house so that anyone who might open the door would not see him.

It was lucky he did this for he had scarcely more than got in among the trees, when, happening to look back, he saw the Tory, Henry Wilton, and his son Tom, come around the corner of the stable. They had come out to kill a couple of chickens, to broil for the sick and wounded British soldiers, but of course Dick did not know this. He

was interested, however, and wondered what they would do when they saw the form of the insensible Tory.

They caught sight of it the instant they got around to the rear of the stable, and exclamations of surprise and wonder escaped their lips.

"What does this mean?" gasped Mr. Wilton.

"It's Sam Jenks, father!" exclaimed Tom.

"Yes, and he's dead."

"Maybe not; let's see."

As he spoke the boy advanced and looked down at the face of the unconscious man. Then he knelt and placed his hand over the man's heart.

"No, he isn't dead, father," he said. "His heart is beating, faintly."

"Goodness, but what does it mean?" gasped Henry Wilton. "Who did this? How did it happen, I wonder?"

"He's been choked, father!" exclaimed Tom. "See here. Look at the finger-prints on his throat!"

"That's so," after looking. "But who in the world can have done it?"

"Yes, and where is he now?"

The two looked all around them, eagerly and suspiciously.

CHAPTER XI.

THE BRITISH APPEAR.

Dick watched the two, with a smile on his face.

"They seem to be somewhat surprised," he said to himself. "Well, let them be; I don't care. I guess that fellow, Jenks, will know more when he comes to than he did before."

Then he turned and walked away, heading back toward the Santee River.

He reached the point where he had left the boat, an hour later, and getting in, he rowed back across the stream. Tying the boat amid the bushes, he climbed up the bank and made his way to the home of Mr. Harrison.

"Well, what luck did you have?" the patriot asked.

"Good," replied Dick. "I learned something that will be of benefit to us."

"What did you learn?"

"That a force of British is coming up from Charleston for the purpose of trying to hunt us down."

"From Charleston?" in surprise. "How did they know anything about the matter down there?"

"Tom Wilton went down there on horseback, and told them."

"Oh, that's the way of it, eh?"

"Yes; he got home while I was there, and I was lucky enough to hear him talking to his father about the matter."

"Well, you were in luck, sure enough."

"Yes, and as in all probability a strong force will come

down from Camden, we will have to look out for ourselves."

"So you will; likely the enemy will be too strong for you."

"Yes; that is, too strong for us to meet in open battle; but we will strike them some blows when they are not looking for it."

"Yes, you may be able to do that."

After some further conversation Dick took his departure.

He went straight back to the rendezvous in the swamp and told General Marion what he had learned.

"Well, we shall have to be on our guard, and not let them get a chance to strike us unexpectedly," said the "Swamp Fox."

"You are right, sir," said Dick.

Then they talked the matter over thoroughly, and laid some plans for their guidance when the British should put in an appearance.

As Dick Slater and General Marion had supposed would be the case, the British soldiers and the Hessians who had been routed in the engagement at the Santee, when the prisoners were rescued, had gone toward Camden.

The majority got back there, though some who were wounded died on the road, and when the soldiers told their story Generals Cornwallis and Rawdon were horrified and amazed. They were very angry as well.

They called a council at once, and discussed the affair. One of the returned soldiers was present at the council, and he was asked many questions.

"How many of these rebels were there, do you think?" asked Cornwallis.

"I should say between two and three hundred, sir," was the reply.

"So many as that?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you say they were on horseback?"

"They were, sir."

"All of them?"

"All."

The officers looked at one another perplexedly.

"Who can they have been?" remarked General Rawdon.

"I think I know who part of them were," said Cornwallis.

"Who?"

"The Liberty Boys of '76,' as they are called."

The others nodded assent, and one said: "There can be no doubt regarding that, as they were in the battle here. But who were the others that were with them?"

"That is the question," said Cornwallis. "But I believe I can give a shrewd guess as to their identity."

"Who do you think they were?" asked Rawdon.

"It is my guess that they were members of one of those guerrilla bands under Marion or Sumpter."

The others nodded assent.

"Likely you are right," one said.

"I think so," said Cornwallis. "The fact that they were

on horseback would indicate this, as the guerilla bands are mounted always."

Then followed a discussion regarding what should be done.

It did not take long to decide as regarded this. It was unanimously voted that a strong force should be sent down to the crossing of the Santee, with the purpose in view of hunting down the "rebels" and punishing them for what they had done.

It was decided that six hundred men should be sent.

"Those 'Liberty Boys' and the guerrillas are terrible fighters," said General Cornwallis, "and we must send a strong force."

The others coincided in this view of the case, and so six hundred men were sent, under command of several officers who were known to be brave and shrewd, and they were instructed to run the rebels to earth, if possible, and exterminate them.

When the British force reached the home of Mr. Harrison it stopped, and the officers made inquiries of the patriot settler.

Had a party of horsemen been at his house, or had one passed his place?

Of course, he said that he had not seen any horsemen. He was a stanch and true patriot, and he did not intend to help the enemy in any way if he could help it.

"How far is it from here to the Santee?" asked the officer in command of the force.

"Two miles," was the reply.

"All right; we are close enough, then; we will go into camp here, near your house, sir. I suppose you have no objections?"

"I judge it would do me no good if I did object?" said Mr. Harrison, smilingly.

"Well," with an answering smile, "I judge that you are right about that."

"I shall be glad to have you camp near here," said Mr. Harrison, who thought he might as well make himself as safe as possible. "Then, if the horsemen you are looking for should come this way, they could not rob me, or take any of my stock."

"True; we would protect you. I suppose you are a loyal king's man?" with a keen look.

"Oh, yes, indeed."

"That is good. I see you have hogs and cattle. We will need a lot of food, and we will pay you for whatever we take."

"Very well, sir, and thank you."

The British went into camp, as it was nearly sundown, and soon the campfires were blazing brightly. Sentinels were placed out—a double row of them, for the British did not intend that they should be taken by surprise, as their comrades had been.

They cooked and ate their supper, and just after they had finished a tall, lank, roughly-dressed man was ushered into camp by the officer of the guard. He was taken to the tent occupied by the commanding officer, a colonel.

"Well, sir, who are you?" the colonel asked, eyeing the man searchingly.

"My name is Sam Jenks, sir," was the reply.

"Humph! I suppose you are a loyal king's man?"

"I am, sir."

"Very good. What do you want? What can I do for you?"

"Waal," with a grin, "I thort I mought do sumthin' fur you."

"Ah!" with a look of interest. "What do you think you can do for me?"

"Say, ye've come heer ter git er lick at ther fellers whut hit yer men sech er hard lick ther other day, haven't ye?"

"We have."

"I thort so. Waal, I know who them fellers wuz."

"Ah! Who were they?"

"Ther chaps whut air called 'Ther Liberty Boys of '76' an' ther 'Swamp Fox' an' his gang."

The colonel nodded.

"I was pretty sure of that," he said, "so it isn't really news for me; but if you could tell me where to find the scoundrels, now, that would indeed be doing something for me."

The rough-looking fellow nodded.

"Waal, I kin do thet, too," he said.

"You can?" excitedly.

"Yas."

"Good! Tell me where they may be found and you shall be rewarded."

"I'll do more; I'll show ye whur they air ter be foun'."

"That will be better. You shall lose nothing by doing so, I assure you."

"Thet's all right; I hev er grudge erg'in ther chap whut is called Dick Slater, ther captain uv ther 'Liberty Boys.' I got good an' choked yisterday, an' I've foun' out sence thet et wuz Dick Slater whut done ther chokin', an' I want'er git even with 'im."

"Very good. How far from here are the rebels in question?"

"They hev theer headquarters erbout two miles from heer."

"Ha! so close as that?"

"Yas."

"Good! That is fine. I am glad that you came here, Mr. Jenks. But how about this place where they are quartered? Is it easy of access?"

A sober look came over the Tory's face, and he shook his head somewhat solemnly.

"No," he replied. "Et hain't easy ter git at, ef thet's whut ye mean."

"That is what I mean. They occupy a strong position, then?"

"Waal, et wouldn' be sech er very strong persishun ef ye could onct git at 'em; but thet's ther trubble."

"Where are they?—on the top of a hill, with fortifications thrown up?"

"No; they're in er swamp."

"In a swamp!"

"Yas; on a islan' in ther middle uv er big swamp."

The officer nodded, slowly. "I might have suspected that, had I thought," he said. "That's where General Marion got his name of 'The Swamp Fox,' by hiding in swamps."

"Yer right, sir."

"Humph! Well, is there no way of reaching this island and taking the rebels by surprise?"

"I don' think so; ther is on'y one way ter reach et, an' thet is by er narrer, crooked path, an' this is watched all ther time, so et'd be impossorble ter git over ter ther islan' without bein' diskivered."

"Humph. Well, this is not the most pleasant prospect in the world, I must say. I am glad that I know where they are, but I am sorry they are in such a place."

"Waal, thet 'Swamp Fox' is not ther man ter stay enny-whur thet would be easy ter git at."

"I guess you are right about that."

The colonel sent an orderly, and had all the officers summoned to the tent. When they had assembled he told them the news.

"Now, the question is, what shall we do?" he said. "How shall we go about the work of getting at the rebels?"

This was made the subject of rather a lengthy discussion, and at last it was decided that they would go to the point where the path led to the island in the swamp, and go into camp. They would stay there and either force the "rebels" to come out and surrender, or starve them to death.

"Are you sure there is no other way of getting off the island?" the colonel asked Jenks.

"Yas, I'm shore uv et," was the reply.

"Then that settles it. We will go to the point where the path begins, and go into camp. We will stay there till the rebels are willing to come out and surrender."

At once orders were sent out for the soldiers to get ready to break camp and march.

CHAPTER XII.

ESCAPING FROM A TRAP.

As good luck would have it, the tent occupied by the commander of the British force was near the house occupied by Mr. Harrison, and he had happened to be down at the gate when the Tory, Sam Jenks, was ushered into the tent. It was dusk, but Mr. Harrison recognized the fellow.

"That's Sam Jenks," he said to himself, "and I'll wager that he has gone to the commander of the British force to tell him where the 'Swamp Fox' and Dick Slater and their forces are to be found. Sam knows where the island in the swamp is, and I am pretty sure that he knows it is used as a rendezvous by Marion. He will tell the British officer about it, and they will go there and either get across and

make an attack on the patriots, or they will settle down there and hold them prisoners on the island, till they are forced by hunger to come out and surrender!"

Mr. Harrison was somewhat excited. He knew that it was necessary that the patriots be warned, and he made up his mind to do it.

"I'm afraid, though, that if I go, the British officer will send for me, and finding me gone, will suspect that I have gone to warn the patriots; for Sam Jenks suspects that I am not a king's man. I know what I'll do—I'll send one of the girls! Lucy knows the way as well as I do, and she will not be afraid to go. Yes, I'll send her, and then the British officer will not know that anyone has left my house."

Mr. Harrison hastened to and into the house, and told his wife and children what he had discovered and what he suspected, and then he asked Lucy if she would be afraid to go and warn the patriots of their danger.

"Why, no, I won't be afraid, father," was the reply.

"All right; then get ready and go at once."

"Say, father, let me go with Lucy," said Tom.

"Very well; you may go, Tom."

"I'm not afraid to go alone, father," said Lucy.

"I know; but Tom can go just as well as not."

The two quickly got ready, and then, slipping out the back way, stole past the stable, and got into the timber. As soon as they were in among the trees they increased their speed, and walked quite rapidly.

They knew the way well, and had no trouble on that score.

Half an hour later they reached the point where the path entered the swamp, and they made their way along the path as rapidly as was possible, it being now dark.

They were challenged by the sentinel on the island, and Lucy called out and told who they were. The Rangers all knew the members of Mr. Harrison's family, and so the two were permitted to advance without question.

"We want to see General Marion and Captain Slater as quickly as possible," said Lucy. "We have important information for them."

"All right, miss; you'll find them at the camp, yonder," was the reply.

The two hastened onward, and were soon at the camp.

They went to where General Marion and Dick sat talking, and as they approached both the men leaped up and bowed to Lucy.

"What brings you out at this time of the night, Miss Lucy?" asked General Marion.

"I have come to warn you, sir," was the reply. "There is a large force of British at our house, and——"

"Thank you, Miss Lucy," with a smile, "but we knew that. We had scouts out, and one came back with the report nearly an hour ago."

"Yes, but father sent me to tell you, sir, that Sam Jenks, a Tory, is having a conference with the British commander, and father says that Jenks knows that you use

this island as a rendezvous, and will guide the British here."

"Ah, ha! That is news, sure enough!" exclaimed the "Swamp Fox." "I remember Sam Jenks very well; he was at one time a member of my company, but he played the traitor, and I would have hanged him, but he succeeded in making his escape."

"Then, if he knows of this hiding-place, there is danger in remaining here, General Marion," said Dick.

"Yes, indeed! He will guide the British to the point where the path leads from the mainland, and they will go into camp there and remain until we are forced by starvation to come forth and surrender."

"Then the thing for us to do is to get away from here at once."

"Yes; we must get away before the enemy reaches here, and then we will have a good chance to strike them a blow when they are not expecting anything of the kind."

The word was at once sent around for the men to get ready to break camp. The men obeyed the order, and were soon busily at work, getting ready to leave the island.

Within half an hour's time they were ready, and the start was made.

Lucy and Tom had already taken their departure, after being thanked earnestly by General Marion and Dick Slater.

It took the force half an hour to reach the mainland, and they more than half expected to be treated to a volley as they reached this point, but they were happily disappointed.

The British force had not yet put in an appearance.

"Now, then, where shall we go?" asked Dick, when they had got far enough away from the point where the path entered the swamp, so that they felt safe.

"I think I know of a very good place to take up our quarters, Dick," was the reply. "It is on the top of a hill, about three-quarters of a mile from here."

"That will be all right; we don't want to get too far away."

"No, we want to remain close enough so that we can be ready to pounce down upon the British at any moment."

"So we do. Well, to the hill we will go."

They made their way along, through the timber, and half an hour later they were at the top of the hill.

Here they dismounted (and unbridled and unsaddled their horses and tethered them. Then they began getting ready to make themselves as comfortable as possible.

"One thing, at this time of the year, campfires are not necessary," said General Marion, "so we will not need to run the risk of betraying our whereabouts by having fires."

"True," agreed Dick; "that is one good thing."

Then he suggested that he should go back and spy on the British. "I want to see what they are going to do," he said.

"Go along," said Marion. "It will be a good thing to know just how they are located, and it will aid us when we make the attack."

"When do you intend to make the attack?"

"Oh, about midnight."

"Do you think there is any danger that they will discover that we have left the island, and will be on the lookout for an attack, General Marion?"

"I don't think they will make the discovery."

"What is your reason for thinking thus?"

"Well, they are being guided by Sam Jenks, and he knows how utterly useless it would be to try to get to the island if we were there; so I think he will advise that they wait till morning, and then demand our surrender, under cover of a flag of truce."

"Likely you are right, but for fear they might investigate and learn that we have made our escape, I think it will be a good plan to keep an eye on them."

"Yes, indeed; and take two or three men along with you, so that you may be able to send a messenger to me, in case the British do make the discovery. On receipt of such a message I will come at once, with the entire force, and we will strike the enemy as hard a blow as we possibly can."

"Very well."

Then Dick told Bob and Mark to come with him, and they left the encampment and made their way back toward the point where they expected to find the enemy.

"Say, Dick, that was nice of the girl, Lucy Harrison, coming and warning us of our danger," said Bob, as they walked along.

"So it was, Bob; she is a beautiful girl, isn't she?"

"Yes; and that reminds me that Dave Dunham thinks so. He has fallen in love with her, I am sure."

"Yes, he won't talk about anything else," said Mark.

"Well, he is a fine fellow, and she is a nice girl, so if they fall in love with each other it will be all right," said Dick.

"There is no doubt but what Dave is already in love," said Bob. "It only remains to be seen whether or not the girl has taken a liking to him."

"I think she will do so if he goes courting her, and I will give him a chance to do so if we remain long in this part of the country."

"Oh, you're a great fellow to help the boys win sweethearts, Dick!"

"I do as I would wish to be done by, Bob."

"That's right."

They stopped talking now, for they were nearing the point where they expected to find the British, and it would not do to be discovered.

While still two or three hundred yards away from the place, they caught sight of the gleaming light of a campfire, which had no doubt been built for lighting purposes.

"They're on hand!" whispered Bob.

"Yes," replied Dick. "Now we must be very careful, and if they have found out that we have made our escape from the trap they had set for us we must learn the fact, and send word to General Marion, so that he can bring our men and strike the British a blow at once."

They advanced, slowly and cautiously.

They got as close as they dared go, and then paused, and, taking up positions behind trees, watched the enemy closely.

It did not take them long to locate the British commander's tent, and they kept their gaze focussed on it.

CHAPTER XIII.

PREPARING TO STRIKE.

When Lucy and Tom got back home they found that the British were just breaking camp.

They succeeded in getting into the house by the back way, without being seen, and were greeted eagerly by their parents and sister Mabel.

"Did you get to see General Marion and Captain Slater?" asked Mr. Harrison.

"Yes, father," said Lucy.

"And you told them what I said, of course."

"Yes."

"And they are going to leave the island?"

"Yes. General Marion gave the order before we came away."

"Good; then they will be able to get away before the British get there, I think."

"Yes, I think so."

"Well, you and Tom have done well, Luc'."

They were still talking of the matter when there came a knock on the door. Mr. Harrison went to the door and opened it.

The British commander was standing there.

"Ah, I wished to speak a word or two before we leave here, sir," the officer said. "I have learned the whereabouts of the rebels, and a man who is in the camp here tells me that he has reason to believe that you are not a loyal king's man; so I have come to warn you not to try to carry the news to the rebels that we are breaking camp, as they would then be able to get away, perhaps."

"Your informant is wrong, sir," said Mr. Harrison, with apparent sincerity. "I am a loyal king's man, and have no wish to carry news to the rebels."

"Very well. I thought I would give you fair warning, that is all."

"The warning was not needed, I assure you, sir."

"I hope that is true, for your own sake."

Then the officer bowed and turned away.

Mr. Harrison watched till he saw the colonel reach the encampment, and then he closed the door, and turned a smiling face toward his wife and children.

"I fooled him nicely, didn't I?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, father," said Lucy.

"But it seems awful to have to tell such—such big—stories, Robert!" said Mrs. Harrison.

She was a very conscientious woman, and detested anything savoring of duplicity or hypocrisy.

"Well, it is no crime to tell lies in war times, wife," said Mr. Harrison, with a smile. "Indeed, it is necessary, and I think that telling lies to deceive the enemy is the least crime that is to be met up with. There are other things quite as common that are a great deal worse."

"Yes, that is true; but I shall be, oh, so glad when the war is ended."

"I shall be glad, too," agreed her husband. "But until that time comes we will have to meet the issue, and do the best we can."

"True, Robert."

"That British officer little suspects that we have already warned the patriots," said Mr. Harrison, with a chuckle. "He would be the maddest man in South Carolina if he knew it."

"So he would," agreed Lucy. "Well, I'm glad that we did warn the patriots."

"And so am I," from Tom.

Meanwhile the British were busily at work breaking camp.

This was accomplished at the end of half an hour from the time the colonel was at the door of the Harrison house, and then the little army marched away through the timber.

It was guided by Sam Jenks, and by his side walked the colonel, a private soldier leading his horse, back at the rear of the procession.

"What did Bob Harrison say when ye told 'im thet I said he wuzn't a loyal king's man?" asked Jenks, presently.

"He denied it, and said you were mistaken."

"Uv course he'd say thet."

"Yes, I suppose it would be only natural that he should deny it."

"Sartin. He's er rebel, though, an' I'll bet onter et."

"Well, I warned him not to try to warn the rebels that we were breaking camp, and I guess there is no danger of him attempting to do so."

"No, he couldn' do enny good by doin' et now, ennyway, fur even if he went there they wouldn' hev time ter break camp an' git erway afore we got theer."

"I suppose not."

"No."

"You think we will surely have the enemy cooped up on the island, then, Mr. Jenks?"

"Yas, theer kain't be enny doubt erbout et."

When the point they were headed for was reached, the British force went into camp, and Jenks led the way to where the pathway left the mainland and led toward the island.

"Thar, d'ye see thet?" he remarked.

The officers said that they did.

"Waal, thet leads straight ter ther islan', an' et's ther on'y way uv gittin' thar, er gittin' erway frum thar. Ye kin see fur yerself thet on'y er few men could come erlong et ter onet, an' they could be shot down without enny trubble."

"Yes," said the colonel, "if they are on the island and this is the only way of leaving it, then we have them, without any doubt."

The British did not care if the patriots who were supposed to be on the island did know that they were there, so a huge campfire was built, for lighting purposes.

The officers got together to hold a council, and it was decided, after considerable talk, to wait till morning before doing anything, and then to send in a demand for the surrender of the enemy.

Dick, Bob, and Mark watched the British for quite a while.

They were eager to see whether the enemy intended trying to cross to the island that night, or whether they would wait till morning.

They finally decided that there was to be nothing done that night, and were about to turn and make their way back to the encampment, when they heard the trampling of many feet, and the hum of voices, coming from over toward the right, from where they stood.

"Hello, what does that mean?" said Bob, in a cautious whisper.

"Sounds like quite a good-sized force coming," said Mark.

Dick said nothing, and the three waited, watched, and listened.

Presently a sharp voice was heard cry: "Halt! Who comes there?"

Then the trampling sound ceased, and the murmur of voices could be heard as the newcomers' leader talked with the sentinel. Then the trampling was resumed, and the three "Liberty Boys," who were watching closely, saw a force of at least two hundred British soldiers march into the encampment.

"I know who they are," whispered Dick. "They are from Charleston. It is the force that Tom Wilton said was coming up from that city for the purpose of hunting us down."

"All right," said Bob; "let them hunt. The more there are of the enemy, the easier it will be for us to kill somebody when we open fire on them."

"That's so," said Mark. "Of course, we would have no chance in a hand-to-hand combat."

"We will be careful, and not get into that kind of a fight with them," said Dick.

"I wonder how they happened to find this place?" remarked Mark.

"Well," said Dick, "that young fellow who was at the head of the force is Tom Wilton; doubtless Sam Jenks, the Tory, told Tom where to bring the force when it came up from Charleston, and then he came on over and acted as guide for the force that had come down from Camden."

"I see," said Bob; "that is it, I'll wager."

They watched the scene with interest.

They saw the leader of the new force go to the tent where the officers of the other force were, and presently all

came forth and stood there, talking. A few minutes later the new force went to one side of the encampment and went into camp.

"I guess that is all there is to be seen," said Dick. "I think we might as well be going."

The others thought the same, and they turned and made their way back to their own encampment.

Dick went straight to General Marion's tent, and reported what he had seen.

"So the British force has been augmented by the arrival of about two hundred troops from Charleston, eh?" remarked the "Swamp Fox."

"Yes, sir," replied Dick.

"That makes it larger than our party."

"So it does."

"Four times our own number of men."

"Yes."

"That is big odds, my boy."

"Yes, indeed; it is entirely too big odds for anything like equal terms in a battle; but by taking them by surprise, I think we can strike them a hard blow, without much danger to ourselves."

The "Swamp Fox" nodded.

"Yes, I think so," he agreed; "and we are going to do it, too."

"We have a splendid chance," said Dick. "They think we are on the island, and will not be expecting an attack from the mainland."

"You are right; and that gives us a big advantage, in spite of their superior force."

"I think so; we can strike them and get away before they realize what it means."

"Which is exactly what we will do; you sized up the position of the enemy well, Dick?"

"Yes, sir. The British are encamped right in front of the point where the path leads to the island."

"All right; we will know how to go, in order to strike them from the rear."

"What time will we leave here?"

"About half-past eleven."

"We can take our time, then, and get there by twelve."

"Yes; and be all ready to strike the blow."

The two remained in conversation for some time, and then Dick left the tent and went to the point where the "Liberty Boys" were stationed, and rolling in a blanket, went to sleep.

He got about two hours of sleep, and then was awakened.

It was now eleven o'clock, and the encampment was astir.

All the members of the patriot force looked to their weapons, and when they were ready the start was made, Dick and the "Swamp Fox" being in the lead.

As they drew near the point where the enemy was encamped, they moved very slowly and carefully, so it was nearly midnight when they reached a point that permitted them to get a good look into the camp of the British.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE BLOW.

A shrill whistle sounded on the still night air.

Then there sounded the rush of many feet.

A drowsy sentinel suddenly became wide awake, and yelled out:

"Halt! Who comes there?"

Too late!

The answer is a blow on the head from the butt of a musket, and he sinks down unconscious, while the owners of the rushing feet dash forward with unabated speed.

The sentinel's challenge of "Halt! Who comes there?" had been heard by other sentinels, however, and suddenly there sounded the reports of three muskets, one after the other, and coming from different directions.

The musket shots aroused the British encampment, however, and the soldiers leaped up, and grasped their muskets.

"Halt!" suddenly sounded, in a sharp, imperative voice. Then immediately following it came the order:

"Take aim—fire!"

Crash—roar!

The Rangers and "Liberty Boys" had succeeded in taking the British by surprise, as they had figured on doing.

They fired the volley from the muskets, and did wonderful execution, many of the British falling, dead and wounded.

The British soldiers had recovered from the daze they had been thrown into by the unexpected attack, and now they fired a volley in the direction from which the volleys that had done such damage among their numbers had come.

Several of the Rangers and "Liberty Boys" were wounded, but none so seriously but what they were able to run, and a sharp whistle from Dick was the signal for them to retreat.

They obeyed the signal, and retreated quickly.

By this time the British officers were out of their tents, and when they saw the havoc that had been caused in the ranks of their men they were wild with rage. They yelled out commands to charge into the timber, and the orders were obeyed; but when the British did charge they found no one there. The enemy had disappeared.

Disappointed and disgusted, the officers and soldiers returned to the encampment, and the first thing that was done was to place out a much larger force of sentinels. The officers were determined that they would not be taken by surprise a second time.

Then they took a survey of the scene, and counted the dead and wounded. Of the former there were eighty-seven, of the latter thirty-four.

It was terrible, they decided, and they fairly ground their teeth in rage.

Sam Jenks was questioned regarding the matter, and he admitted that this must have been the way of it. He

hinted that Mr. Harrison had carried the news to the patriots, but the colonel said that was not possible.

"I saw him, and talked to him not ten minutes before we broke camp," he said, "and he could not have got to the island and warned the rebels in time so that they could have made their escape."

It was a mystery, and the more they discussed it the more of a mystery it became, and at last they gave it up.

The dead soldiers had been buried by this time, and the wounded ones had been attended to as best could be done, and the camp again settled down to quiet. The officers had held a council and decided that they would not attempt to do anything until the morrow, when they would try to hunt the "rebels" down and kill or capture them.

As for the patriots, they returned to their encampment in high spirits. They had succeeded in striking the enemy a strong blow, and had not suffered much as a result; perhaps a dozen of their men had been wounded, but only one or two seriously.

"They will not be likely to try to hunt us down, to-night, will they?" Dick asked General Marion.

"I don't think so; they understand that it would be useless. We know the country thoroughly, while they do not, and they are well aware of that fact. No, they will wait till morning, and then will do their best to catch up with us."

The "Liberty Boys" and the Rangers were up by daylight, next morning, and as soon as they had eaten breakfast they bridled and saddled their horses, and mounting, rode away. They went around onto the opposite side of the swamp from where the British had been encamped, and stayed there till along toward evening.

They had left scouts behind them, and these scouts came in with the report that the British were looking for the Rangers and "Liberty Boys," but were evidently greatly puzzled and at a loss to know where their enemy had gone.

Along toward evening the party mounted their horses and rode on around the swamp, and went into camp. Dick and Bob set out, to see if they could find the encampment of the British, and they were fortunate enough to catch sight of the British force. It was marching through the timber, and was headed in the direction of the Harrison home.

"Where are they going, Dick?" asked Bob.

"I think they are going to march to the Harrison home and go into camp there," was Dick's reply. "It is a good place for a camp, and they can get food and water there."

"Shall we follow them?"

"I will do so; you go back and tell General Marion."

"Will he break camp and come this way, do you think?"

"Yes; that will be the right thing to do; we want to strike the British another blow to-night, if possible, and we don't want to be too far away when we get ready to move."

"That's so. Well, I will go back."

The two parted, Dick following the British, while Bob

hastened back toward where the Rangers and "Liberty Boys" had gone into camp.

When Bob got there and told General Marion where the British were headed for, he gave the order to break camp at once, and twenty minutes later they were moving through the timber, going in the direction of the Harrison home.

They kept on in this direction till they were within a mile of the Harrison home, and then they were joined by Dick Slater, who told General Marion that the British had gone into camp at the farmhouse.

"Very good," said Marion. "We may be able to strike them a blow to-night."

"I hope so."

They were now settled down in camp, and while waiting for the hour when they would move against the enemy, Dick and Bob made their way toward the home of the Harrisons.

They got up close behind the stable, and sized up the situation carefully.

The British were evidently on their guard, for there was a double row of sentinels, and the youths saw it would be difficult to strike them unexpectedly. The redcoats were guarding against being taken by surprise.

After staying there an hour or so the two returned to the patriot encampment and reported to General Marion.

"It will be a difficult matter to strike them a blow," the "Swamp Fox" said. "But perhaps we may be able to do them some damage."

About midnight the entire British force, with the exception of the sentinels, was sound asleep, and the patriot force managed to get up to almost within musket-shot distance without being discovered; then they dashed forward, but a sentinel discharged his musket, and by the time they were close enough to fire the British were on their feet.

The patriots fired a volley from the muskets, and then quickly retreated, followed by a volley from the muskets of the enemy, but they were not injured, with the exception of a few slight wounds.

This second attack made the British very angry.

The officers got together and held a council, and they made threats that they would not rest till they had hunted the "rebels" down and wiped them out.

Next day they entered upon this work, but found it much more difficult than they had counted upon.

It seemed impossible for them to run the patriots to earth.

The "rebels" were here, there, and everywhere. They knew the country thoroughly, while the redcoats did not. Of course, the British had the Tory, Sam Jenks, to guide them, but the trouble was that the British soldiers could not get around fast enough to be effective. They would hear of the patriots one place, and when they got there the patriots would be gone.

Finally the British officers saw there was no use trying to catch such a lively lot of men as were the patriots, and they held a council and decided to give up the attempt.

"The longer we stay here the worse it is for us," said the colonel. "If we stay long enough these blasted rebels will succeed in thinning out our ranks till they will be in a position to give us battle, with a fair chance of defeating us."

"That's right," agreed another. "We have not gained anything by being here."

"No, but we have lost a goodly number of men."

"So we have. Well, we will send the wounded men to Camden, and then follow."

That very day the work of sending the wounded men to Camden in wagons was begun, the wagons being furnished by Mr. Harrison, and two days later the British force broke camp. The larger force returned to Camden, the other starting back to Charleston.

Of course, the patriots were watching closely, and knew what was going on, and the result was that they struck the force of two hundred men who were returning to Charleston a severe blow, killing and wounding half their number.

This done the patriots returned to the Santee, and made their way to the home of the Harrisons. They were given a hearty welcome by all the members of the family, and Dave Dunham, who had managed to find time to court pretty Lucy Harrison some during the past week or so, even though helping chase the redcoats, and keeping out of their way, alternately, was given a warm welcome by the girl. It was evident that he had won her love, and this was pleasing to Dick and his comrades, who always liked to see one of their comrades successful in affairs of this kind.

The Rangers and the "Liberty Boys" remained there three days, and then it was decided that they would part company.

"We have helped you some, General Marion," said Dick, "but now things are quiet around here, and I think we had better be going back up North, so we will bid you good-by and go."

"You have been a great help to me," said the "Swamp Fox." "I hope that we may be together again some time, and together make it lively for the redcoats."

"I hope so, sir."

Early next morning the "Liberty Boys" bade the Rangers and the members of the Harrison family good-by, and rode away, toward the North.

THE END.

The next number (131) of "The Liberty Boys of '76" will contain "THE LIBERTY BOYS AND ETHAN ALLEN; OR, OLD AND YOUNG VETERANS," by Harry Moore.

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